BING

Spring
2019

No. 181

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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BING magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326
Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Club_Crosby

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USA and Canada	US $35 per annum
UK	£20 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£22 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$50 per annum
Rest of World	£23 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::

(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins

(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year.

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EDITORIAL

A fascinating variety of articles awaits you in this issue. Greg Van Beek has provided our front cover and the back cover originated from Arthur Blood who sadly passed away in January.

The main talking point in recent months has been the wonderful new book from Gary Giddins and we have a number of reviews of this. Gary has promoted his masterpiece very heavily indeed and I do hope the sales are going well because we badly want a volume 3. Have you got your copy yet?

In this issue David Lobosco examines *Top O' the Morning*, a film that has not been reviewed in Celluloid Crosby before, probably because of the difficulty of actually seeing a copy. Thankfully TCM showed it in March, the first time it has been seen on TV since 1998.

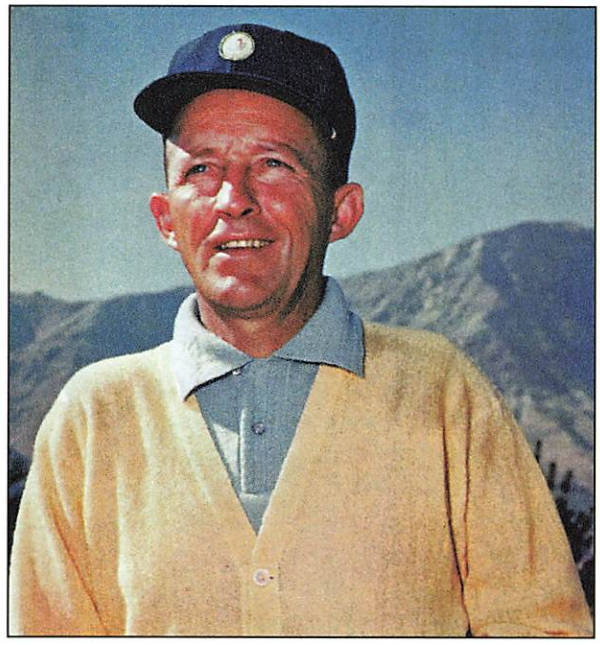
In an article I found in the archives, I recall the memorable time that Bing's butler, Alan Fisher, visited our Leeds meeting in 2000 and Ken Crossland discovers how Crosby collectors shared their recordings in years gone by. Martin McQuade has contributed several diverse articles and Graham Pascoe continues to amaze me with his knowledge of the Australian scene.

Richard Baker has had a struggle to find new Bing releases but at least he does have the excellent "Holiday in Europe" CD to consider this time. We owe a huge debt to Richard Tay of Sepia Records for his ongoing efforts to issue Crosby CDs at a time when CD sales everywhere are falling. Streaming has become the norm for younger folks but this development helped the Crosby cause around Christmas time because it resulted in Bing appearing in the best-seller charts again.

Do please read Michael Crampton's report carefully because we shall need to take decisions for the future of the club later this year. Jeremy Rose and I have had some success in raising some funds for the club from the collections of Gwen Harvey and John Norris Wood but it was very hard work and not something we should like to repeat too often.

Last date for material intended for the summer issue is June 25 but earlier submissions are very much appreciated.

Malcolm Macfarlane macwilmslo@aol.com



For both personal and professional reasons, it has been impossible for me to contribute my usual article on a lesser-known Bing Crosby album this time around, but I have been doing some research on the excellent, yet overlooked, *Bing Sings the Great Country Hits* LP, and an in-depth piece about that record will be coming your way in the next issue.

In the meantime, I commend all contributors for their wonderful work for the current issue. One subject about which members will find a great deal to read in the magazine is Gary Giddins' second volume of Bing's biography, *The War Years*. I have finally had the chance to read it, and I must agree with my fellow British Co-Editor that it is yet another masterpiece that has been well worth the wait. This new installment is the fruit of painstaking research that has been developing over the course of several years, and the result is as fascinating to read as the first part of the biography. The book is certainly a treasure for Crosby fans given the amount of detail and passion for the subject that the author shows. Mr. Giddins' trademark writing style, clear and engaging, graces a book that will undoubtedly be regarded for years to come as one of the best works on jazz and pop music ever written.

It is true that we often bemoan the fact that Crosby CD reissues have been few and far between lately. Fortunately, the good folks at Sepia Records have recently released an extended version of "Holiday in Europe", a classic Bing album whose availability has been very limited since it was reissued digitally in Japan many years ago. I wrote a piece about this LP for the magazine a while back (BING #175) in which I expressed the desire for a new CD edition, and I am happy to see that my wishes have been fulfilled by this great-sounding, bonus track-filled disc from Sepia that belongs on everyone's shelf.

By the time you receive your copy of the magazine, the extremely cold winter we have had in Tennessee will have stepped aside for the arrival of warmer weather, and I would like to take this occasion to thank all members for their support of the club and for the ever-renewing passion they share for all things Crosby.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez antongarciafdez@gmail.com

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

As in previous years my report is being written in early January prior to my extended holiday so my perspective of club affairs is governed by this date. I am heartened by the generosity of our members listed below who in total (as at the 1st of January) have contributed over £700 to support the ICC in 2019 and I am certain that their generosity will be matched by those members who have yet to renew their subscriptions at this date. Equally helpful is the sterling work of Malcolm Macfarlane and Jeremy Rose who have helped raise £653 in passing on the collections of Gwen Harvey and John Norris-Wood. We are very grateful to Gwen and John's families too.

Notwithstanding my comments above and the generous gifts from the members listed below, I must draw members' attention to the annual accounts for 2018. Our subscription income of **£6,612** does not meet the cost of printing BING and falls short by about **£5,000**. Members' donations are a great help but we are still short of the amount we need to comfortably pay for three editions of BING per year going forward.

BING magazine printing and posting costs £12,000 per year and with 440 paying members this amounts to £27.27 per member, a shortfall of £7.27 for each member.

Given my observations above, I have agreed with Wig and David that we will include an insert in the summer magazine in which we will pose a range of options for members to consider. These options might include: – (a) increased subscriptions (b) 2 magazines per year (c) 2 magazines with an interim newsletter. It is vitally important that members respond to the insert and make their views known to the management team so we can meet your wishes going forward.

The "Holiday in Europe plus" CD has proved a popular choice with members ordering over 100 copies by January 5th and orders continuing to be received. My thanks to Jason Liddiard and Perry Huntoon for handling the distribution of the CDs during my absence,

Jason Liddiard's quarterly BING meetings continue and the December meeting exuded the warmth of Christmas with the films and songs by Bing capturing the spirit of Christmas as expressed by him over so many decades. Jason's formula for the meetings is proving very popular and he is to be congratulated for continuing a club tradition which dates back to the 1950s.

Spring is the time to reflect on our past year's activities and during the last twelve months members have applauded the three colour issues of the magazine with many expressing the hope that we will continue with a colour edition going forward. The content has been interesting and engaging and I would like to extend on behalf of all members our thanks and appreciation to Malcolm, Wig, Anton, David, Perry, Scott and all contributors for their dedicated activity on behalf of the ICC. BING magazine would not be possible without your passionate involvement.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a sincere wish that they will derive much interest and enjoyment from their membership of the club.

UNITED STATES

Billy Boring Jnr. (McKinney, Texas), Gloria Wandless (St Louis, Missouri), Jim Hays (Abilene, Texas)

UNITED KINGDOM

Saragh Penfold (Falkirk, Stirlingshire)

DONATIONS

It is a pleasure to commend, applaud and thank the following members for their exceptional generosity in support of the ICC.

Paul Hennessy, Britton C. Smith, Frank Startup, Nicholas Morrison, Ken Shaw, Ken Brown, Roger Addey, Alan Bostock, Geoffrey Robinson, Brenda A Sellers, Trevor Grassby, Frans van der Kolff, Frank Thompson, Gillian Stenning, Mike O'Donoghue, Geoff White, Bill Woodcock, Gil McKee, John Byrd, Margaret North, Bert Bishop, Des Cusack, George Patmore, Matthew Sprott, Bob Halls, Doreen Hubbard, Ian Patience, Tom Wallace, Mike Mansley, Jonathan Cook, John Cooper, C & A Mann, Richard Baker, John Walton and David Grossman.

Donations from USA and Australian members will be acknowledged in the summer issue of BING.

DEATHS

We were truly sorry to learn of the death of **Arthur Blood** of Derby who died on the 25th of January 2019 at the age of 93. Sadly he had lost his wife Vera in recent times. Arthur was a stalwart Crosby enthusiast who contributed decades of support for the ICC producing Bing publicity stamps, 78 clocks, posters and wonderful Christmas cards all intended to promote Bing's image and keep his name highlighted. Arthur gifted the surplus from his sales to the club. He often provided artwork to our Editor and his work adorns our back cover this time around.

Some years ago, Arthur was given one of Bing's old hats. Kathryn Crosby had originally given it to former BING Editor Frank Murphy shortly after Bing's death and when Frank passed away, the hat was gifted to Irish Crosby fan Johnny Jones. In time, Johnny forwarded it to Arthur. As Arthur grew older, he thought that the hat should be passed to a younger member and he donated it to the ICC for that purpose. At the Leeds meeting in 2012, many members had their photo taken with the hat at the meeting and it was then given to Bob Halls who is acting as temporary custodian on behalf of the club.

To Arthur's family and friends we extend our sincere condolences.

Arthur with "the hat"

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following single CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. The price for the double CD is £9.50 UK, £11.50 Ireland & Europe, £15 for rest of the world.

Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 8, 9 and 10
BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors
BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.
JOIN BING & SING ALONG (2 CD SET)

Until next time, my warmest greetings to all members.
Michael Crampton mdcrampton@gmail.com

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2018

Income	**£**	**Expenditure**	**£**
Subscriptions	6612	Production of BING magazine	11610
Donations	2233	Secretarial costs	271
Legacies (Gwen Harvey, J. Norris-Wood)	653	CDs - costs	60
Sales – CDs	837	Editorial costs	6
		ICC web page	86
Bank balance 31/12/2017	10928	Bank balance 31/12/2018	9230
	21263		21263

Note:
1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary. Amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. The club will be able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2019.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

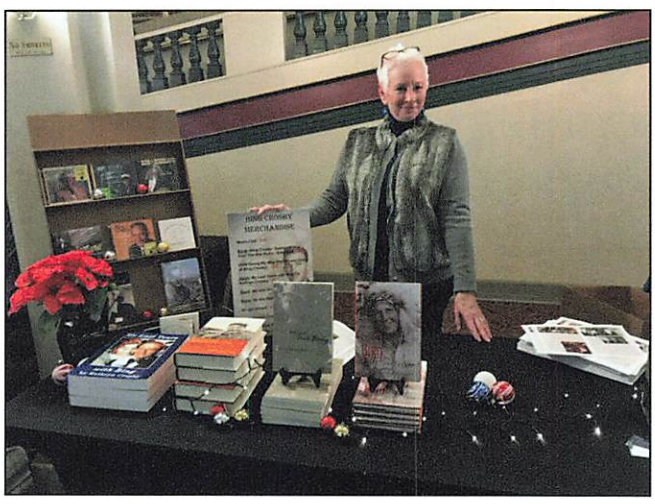
750+ Visitors at the Bing Crosby Theater to see Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival

Judy Schmid made the long journey from Syracuse, New York to attend and she sends her special report.

Over 750 visitors – singles, couples, and families – paid $10 for an all-day ticket to watch two showings of *White Christmas,* plus *Pennies from Heaven* and *Road to Zanzibar*, in the gloriously restored Bing Crosby Theater in Spokane, Bing's hometown, on Saturday, December 8. A good many families included adult children joining their parents – some traveling cross-country – in what's become an annual tradition for them.

In addition to the films, the Hot Club of Spokane performed. They're a swing band that plays tunes made popular by Bing as a Rhythm Boy (with his Spokane musical partner Al Rinker), Bing as a soloist, and tunes by Mildred Bailey, Spokane native and sister to Al Rinker. Howard Crosby, son of Bing's brother Ted and popular regional vocalist, also entertained, singing a number of Bing's holiday and popular tunes.

The film festival was started by the Bing Crosby Advocates in 2005 to not only honor Spokane's most famous former citizen, but to raise funds to help restore what was once the Clemmer Theater where Bing had his professional debut and, as a 12-year old stagehand, witnessed Al Jolson perform, solidifying his own desire to become an entertainer. Stephanie Edwards Plowman, curator of the Crosby Collection at Gonzaga University, Bing's alma mater, is also part of the Advocates, and she staffed a table (with assistance by yours truly, traveling cross country to experience the event at least once!) selling books by Carolyn Schneider, Kathryn Crosby, and Gary Giddins, and with CDs donated by Robert Bader of Bing Crosby Enterprises – all to support the Crosby House and the Bing Crosby Advocates. Sales were brisk!



Judy Schmid helps out on the Advocates table.

Based on casual conversations with teens who loved seeing Bing on the big screen, with mother-adult daughter pairs traveling from as far away as New Jersey and Arizona to bond over their love for Bing, and with volunteers who've attended every year, the film festival will only grow in popularity. Everyone in attendance had smiles on their faces, and songs on their lips! It's quite the tribute to Spokane that this event is so well covered by local media, and that so many families with young children attended, perhaps growing the next generation of Bing Crosby fans!

Judy Schmid

Bing back in the charts

Towards the end of November, Bing's album *The Best of Bing Crosby -- 20th Century Masters: The Christmas Collection* entered the *Billboard 200 chart at* No. 199 with 5,000 units; up 48 percent). The next week it rose to No. 132, then it went to No. 39 and then No. 33 before peaking at No. 27 in Christmas week.

Also, Bing's CD *Christmas Classics* entered the chart on December 15 at No. 70, then it improved to #61 before finishing at No. 64.

The Billboard 200 chart ranks the week's most popular albums based on their overall consumption. That overall unit figure combines pure album sales, track equivalent albums (TEA) and streaming equivalent albums (SEA).

Meanwhile, things were happening on The ***Billboard Hot 100*** chart which ranks the top 100 songs of the week based on sales, radio airplay, and streaming activity in the USA. Bing's "White Christmas" peaked at No. 34 in the chart for the week ending January 5. "Streaming" is certainly helping to bring back some of the stars of yesteryear with Brenda Lee, Nat King Cole, Burl Ives, Gene Autry, Dean Martin and Andy Williams all in the top 20 with Christmas songs.

Bing, The Early Years

Bing's grandson, Gregory Crosby, made this announcement in December on Facebook:

"BING, THE EARLY YEARS -- In development at Make-Believe Entertainment. "During World War II (and for several years after), Bing Crosby was the most popular entertainer the USA had ever known: He was the #1 actor at the movie box office, the #1 recording artist in the world and he hosted the top-rated radio show in America. It's like he was peak Tom Cruise, peak Michael Jackson and peak Johnny Carson all at the same time."

Gregory (age 67) is the chairman and CEO of Make-Believe Entertainment. The Internet Movie Database describes him as a writer / producer and amongst his credits is one for co-producer on *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016).

I must admit that I did not know much about Gregory Crosby and Internet sources show him to be the son of Dennis Crosby and Pat Sheehan. However, I noticed that he was born seven years before the Crosby / Sheehan marriage and further research indicates that he is the product of Pat Sheehan's earlier marriage to George Von Duuglas-Ittu and that he was born in 1951 and given the name of Franz Nicholas Gregory. It seems that Dennis Crosby adopted him and that he became known as Gregory Crosby.

Let's hope Gregory's project comes to fruition.

Another possible film project was the aim of **Ron Hall** of **Festival Films.** He wrote a script years ago and is wondering whether to update it. I found it very interesting to read. Have a look at https://www.fesfilms.com/r2h.pdf

Going My Way in Warrington

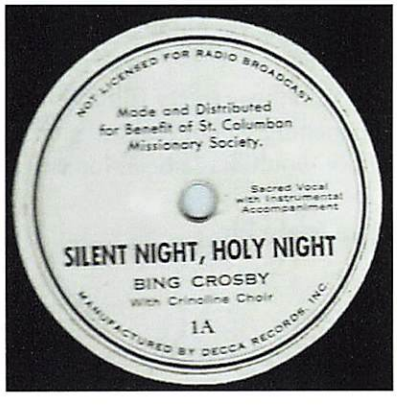
Jason Liddiard reports on his branch meeting in December .

Our Bing 'Christmas Special' got rolling a little earlier than usual with a mini book sale: a good start for any Bing collector! Then it was straight into our Christmas opener; what else but *It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas*, a 1951 recording with John Scott Trotter and Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires.

A few members had braved the harsh cold conditions, along with strikes and delays on the public transport in order to grace us with their presence. Thanks to all of you for your determination and persistence in getting here! One such traveller, our club secretary Michael Crampton, arrived looking like he'd hitched a ride in the back of a frozen Minute Maid delivery truck! We managed to warm Michael, however, by playing Bing and the Andrews Sisters' Hawaiian Christmas greeting *Mele Kalikimaka*.

Sadly, a couple of members were not able to make it this time and sent in requests, Jeremy Rose's choice being Bing and Ella's version of *Silver Bells*, broadcast on the General Electric show of 13th December, 1953. Mark Spry told me in an email received just that morning that he had been watching 1942's *Holiday Inn*, and so requested *Be Careful, It's My Heart*. Great seasonal choices from our absentees! Hope to see you both soon in 2019…

Next up, an early Bing Christmas recording from February 1935 – *Silent Night, Holy Night* with Georgie Stoll's orchestra accompanied by the Crinoline Choir. This was the one done for the St. Columban Missionary Society.


NOT LICENSED FOR RADIO BROADCAST
Made and Distributed for Benefit of St. Columban Missionary Society.
Sacred Vocal with Instrumental Accompaniment
SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
BING CROSBY
With Crinoline Choir
1A
MANUFACTURED BY DECCA RECORDS, INC.

Under 'News and Reviews' we discussed the wonderful second volume of Bing's biography by Gary Giddins. This hefty tome is a fine addition to my 'groaning' shelves!

The group was very excited to hear about the forthcoming Sepia release *Bing Crosby: Holiday in Europe (And Beyond!)* and had us reaching for our cheque books in order to ensure we got our orders in ASAP!

Our programme continued with some Christmas Bing rarities, tracks not regularly heard on the airwaves. These included *Just What I Wanted for Christmas*, with Frank De Vol from 1959; *It's Christmas Time Again*, 1964 with Fred Waring and His Pennsylvanians and, lastly, one of our favourites - *The Secret of Christmas*, again with Frank De Vol and Sammy Cahn's inspiring message, 'It's not the things you do at Christmas time, but the Christmas things you do all year through…'

Following on from the rarities, a classic from Bing and the Andrews Sisters: *Santa Claus Is Coming to Town*. From the same session in September 1943 we played the 'fluffed' version of *Jingle Bells* that had us, as well as the Andrews Sisters, breaking up!

The next section was called 'Snow!' and featured songs about snow (of course!) and not necessarily about Christmas. Prime example being *Snowbird*, from the 1972 *Bing 'n' Basie* album. We also played *White World of Winter* (1965) and the 1952 version of *Sleigh Ride*. The session had started, of course, with Irving Berlin's *Snow* from 1954 with Bing, Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens.

One more Crosby Christmas classic – 1962's *The Littlest Angel*, with the Bob Thompson Orchestra and Bing's baritone buried deep in the bass range, before breaking out for some refreshments.

More Bing Christmas Classics after the break, including *That Christmas Feeling*, *The Christmas Song*, *Here Comes Santa Claus*, *Is Christmas Only a Tree*?, and a personal favourite of mine *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*, a recording from 1956 with the Buddy Cole Orchestra and Ken Darby Singers.

Our film and TV show selection began with musical moments from the 1971 TV show *Bing Crosby and the Sounds of Christmas*, featuring 'The Cop and the Anthem' with Robert Goulet and a 'Bells Medley' with Mary Costa.

Another Bing Christmas Classic, and one of our Editor's favourites, *Do You Hear What I Hear*? 1963, with the Ralph Carmichael Orchestra was followed by our final TV offering, the 1976 'Bing Crosby's White Christmas', from the Time life DVD set.

Our seasonal finale was Bing's 1962 *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, played in honour of member Geoff Vizard who missed a meeting for the first time since we started in June 2016, owing to recent surgery on his shoulder. Here's to a speedy recovery, Geoff – see you in April for our spring Bing outing!

Bing tries to get arrested in 'The Cop and the Anthem'.

Jason Liddiard email: jkl@galleryjkl.com

The Kathryn Crosby Stakes at Del Mar

Martin McQuade reports.

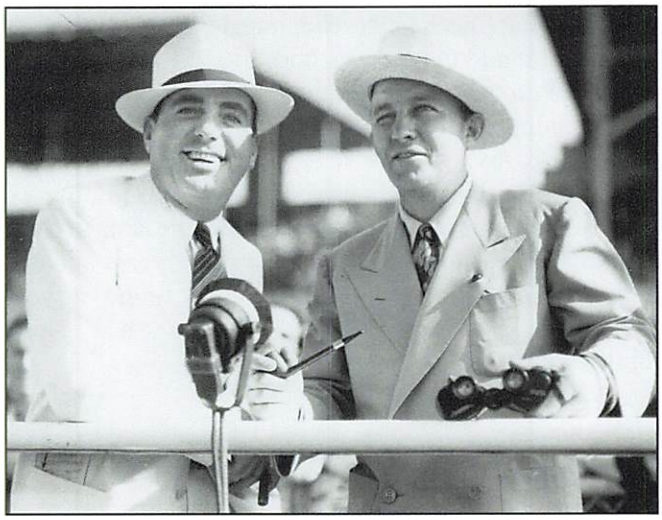
Mac McBride, Director of Media for Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, kindly provided to me this report on The Kathryn Crosby Stakes Race, the featured event on Del Mar's Opening Day Program, held on November 9, 2018. Mac also forwarded several fascinating photos of Bing and friends from Del Mar's gloried past.

KATHRYN CROSBY STAKES HIGHLIGHT: OPENING DAY OF DEL MAR'S FALL RACING SEASON

When the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club looked for a special twist to apply to its new fall racing season in 2014, it chose to go back to its roots. It called the month-long session "The Bing Crosby Season," with a tip of a boater cap to its founder, the show business icon who brought the seaside track into existence – and the national consciousness – in 1937.

Since that founding at the racing headquarters roughly 20 miles north of San Diego on a 350-acre state fairgrounds alongside the blue Pacific, the track "Where the Turf Meets the Surf" (the name of a song Crosby wrote and sang in tribute to his sporting venture) had raced during the summer months only. But with a shifting racing scene ongoing in Southern California, Del Mar was asked to return annually for a shorter fall session.

The late-year race meeting was dressed up in Crosby style with all things Hollywood showing the way. One of those extras was that all major stakes races were given show business names from the Crosby era, many of them tied to folks who used to join Crosby at the shore oval for both sport and frolic, the latter often accomplished at legendary parties in the Turf Club after the races.



Bing with Pat O'Brien at a pre-war Del Mar race meeting.

The major fall races were given names like the Betty Grable Stakes, the Bob Hope Stakes, the Cary Grant Stakes and the Cecil B. DeMille Stakes.

Other celebrity folks were saluted, too, but one special name was reserved for the track's opening day feature, a one-mile spin for fillies and mares. That race was named for one of the finest fillies to be part of Crosby's life, his lovely wife Kathryn.

The Kathryn Crosby Stakes is the special spark on kick-off day of the fall stand and the distaff mile has provided fireworks for the racing fans in its short career so far. This past November a hard-trying Canadian filly named Escape Clause turned up the winner and rewarded her backers $39.40 for every $2 they wagered on her.

In 2016, a quick bay filly named Do the Dance went wire-to-wire and returned $28 for a deuce. In 2015, a filly named Full Ransom came running late to score and ring up a win price of $36.60.

So, if you like to "take a swing," as they say about longshot players at the track, the Kathryn Crosby appears to be a good place to give it a go.

This year Del Mar will conduct its 80th summer of racing starting on July 17 and going forward to Labor Day Monday, September 2. It also will conduct its sixth fall meeting running between November 8 and December 1st.

And those feisty fillies once more will be spotlighted on opening day of that fall stand, something that Bing no doubt would have been looking forward to.

Mac McBride

London Palladium honours stars with stage door wall of fame

A wall of fame honouring stage stars including Bing, Sir Tom Jones, Dame Vera Lynn and Sir Ken Dodd, has been unveiled at the London Palladium. Other featured artists include Sammy Davis Jr, Dame Shirley Bassey, Sir Bruce Forsyth, Nat King Cole, the Two Ronnies, Max Miller, Judy Garland, Arthur Askey and Bob Hope.

The stainless steel portraits, by Lee Simmons, have been hung by the stage door in Great Marlborough Street, Oxford Circus, as part of refurbishment work at the theatre.

Andrew Lloyd Webber, who owns the Grade II-listed building, said he wanted to pay tribute to "the extraordinary range of artists" who had passed through the Palladium.

The composer pulled together "a tiny committee of people old enough to remember some of these artists", including former BBC and ITV chairman Lord Grade and theatrical agent Laurie Mansfield. Stars who had played at least two seasons at the theatre were considered.

Bing in lyrics

In the past, we have listed song lyrics which mention Bing (see issues #155, p41, #158, p26) and Maura Koenig has spotted a new one by the Arctic Monkeys called "Anyways" which was released as a single in December. This is how the lyrics read.

Putting the world to rights with Bing Crosby eyes
Oversharing and its bitter aftertaste
Exactly the wrong time in exactly the wrong place
Save it for a rainy day
Baby, you go hard in the paint
It's just another race to anyways

The song is a previously unreleased B-side from the *Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino* sessions.

A Bel Canto Baritone Named Bing Crosby

Jon Oye recently came across an article by the highly regarded writer and music critic Henry Pleasants in the *New York Times* of December 5, 1976, and it's well worth reading.

It's easy to say, it has often been said, and it's true, that there is not a popular singer today who does not owe something to Bing Crosby. Not a popular singer over 30, anyway. Younger singers owe more to Elvis Presley and the black blues, rhythm and blues and gospel singers of the 50's and 60's.

But merely noting that other singers owe Crosby a lot tells us little about the creditor, or about how he came by his vocal pile. Bing Crosby did not emerge from the Rhythm Boys and the Paul Whiteman Orchestra 50-odd years ago singing as he sings today and as he will no doubt sing during his three week engagement at the Uris Theater beginning on Tuesday.

Nor do we learn much from his most recent records (United Artists), made in London in the summer of 1975 when he was, by his own reckoning, 71, astonishing and delightful as they are for a man of that age or, for that matter, of any age. Time has lowered his effective range by about a major Third, but in that new range the voice is not only unblemished; it is, to my ears, the richer and warmer for it.

To discover and appreciate what Crosby has meant to the singers male and female who came after him, you have to begin by going back half a century and try to discover what older singers and instruments meant to him. You have to go back to the records he made with the Rhythm Boys and to the records of the early years in Hollywood and on radio, and listen to the echoes of his contemporaries most notably Al Jolson, Mildred Bailey, Ethel Waters and a bit later, Louis Armstrong. You also note the echoes you hear rarely, or not at all, of such older or near contemporaries as Whispering Jack Smith, Gene Austin, Little Jack Little and Rudy Vallee. The distinction is obvious, and significant.

If Crosby was carelessly categorized in those days as a crooner, it can only be because the term was applied generically to male singers who had perceived correctly the implications of the microphone and electronic amplification, and had modified their vocalism accordingly. Crosby may have picked up some of his exemplary enunciation from the true crooners of the late 20's. He may owe to them his way of singing to you instead of at you, of seeming to be talking on the melody. But he was not of their musical ilk. What distinguished him from them, and what would eventually establish him as the most important and the most influential transitional figure in the history of American popular singing was his identification with jazz, his predilection for an oratorical approach to song now generally recognized as Afro-American.

There had been some of this in the work of such white singers as Al Jolson and Sophie Tucker, and a lot, of it in the singing of those black female entertainers—now known collectively as "the cakewalking babies"—who were emulating the white headliners of the time. But it was impossible then for a singer working too close to jazz to prosper in the mainstream of American popu-

lar music. That kind of singing rhythm and insinuating phrase was felt to be primitive, coarse, atavistic. Bing Crosby was destined to be the filter through which this Afro-American approach to song would be made palatable to a general American and international public.

He had begun in jazz, as drummer with a Dixieland group at Gonzaga High School in Spokane. He was drummer and vocalist with an outfit called the Musicaladers at Gonzaga University. Then came the partnership with Al Rinker (Mildred Bailey's brother) which, with Harry Barris, would become the Rhythm Boys. Finally, there was Whiteman and the intimate association with Whiteman's young jazzmen, Bix Beiderbecke, Eddie Lang and Frankie Trumbauer.

Whiteman records featuring the Rhythm Boys reveal a far jazzier Crosby—even given to precocious scatting—than we hear on the records he made in the early 30's after leaving the Rhythm Boys to go out on his own. The octave B flat to B flat in Crosby's voice at that time is, to my ears, one of the loveliest I have heard in 50 years of listening to baritones both classical and popular. It dropped conspicuously in later years. Since the mid-1950's, Bing has been more comfortable in a bass range while maintaining a baritone quality, with the best octave being G to G or F to F. In a recording he made of "Dardanella" with Louis Armstrong in 1960, he attacks lightly and easily on a low E-flat. This is lower than most opera basses care to venture, and then tend to sound as if they were in the cellar when they get there.

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Crosby is right when he says that he has very little voice. He is wrong in assuming that what voice he has is ordinary. The error is not surprising to those acquainted with his early records. They show him to have been either slow in appreciating what was best in his voice or reluctant to acknowledge that what was best was all there was. For years he persisted in carrying a lot of voice up to E flat, E, F and even an occasional F sharp. It was always a precarious endeavor, not just because, as he says, he often barely made it but, more importantly, because his voice then lost its characteristic timbre. Above the B flat it took on a tenor quality. The sound, even when the notes were securely landed, was unexceptional.

He found a way around the difficulty quite early on, but seems to have regarded it as an alternative rather than a solution. By moving into head voice, or a mixed chest and head resonance, and a lower area of the scale than previous baritones had done, he was able to sustain a characteristic sound into the upper areas of his range. He had to sacrifice volume, forcefulness and intensity to do it, and he had to ease off in the middle in order to preserve an even scale. This was a sacrifice baritones of his generation were reluctant to make. It implied a loss of virility, a shying away from the challenges of the big climaxes, an easy way out.

This may seem irrelevant to generations conditioned by the singing of popular baritones who came after Crosby and profited by his example. But it must be remembered that in the early days of his career the distinction between popular singers and classical singers was not so clearly drawn as it is today. John McCormack, at that time, was a popular singer. Some of the songs that Crosby was singing in the 30's were also sung by Lawrence Tibbett, John Charles Thomas, Nelson Eddy and other opera baritones, all of whom rejoiced in ringing high F's. F sharps and G's. Crosby did not have them.

What he may not have understood at that time, although he seems to have reacted to it instinctively, was that, with radio, phonograph and soundtrack supplementing and even supplanting public performance, and with amplification available when public performance was required, a singer no longer needed them. Opera singers needed them, to be sure. They still do, because they sing the same old opera repertory, unamplified, in the saute old amphitheatrical opera houses. For any other singer, unencumbered by a stagnant and aging repertory, or by 19th century concepts of vocalism conditioned by the requirements of that repertory, the arrival of radio and the public address system had opened the way to, had indeed demanded, a less forceful, more intimate, more natural kind of vocal production and vocal communication.

Marguerite Haymes, mother of the baritone Dick Haymes, and an extraordinarily perceptive vocal coach, described this manner of production and communication in a book, "The Haymes Way" (1945), as "that 'in the room' intimacy, the sort of intimacy that is typical of Crosby you talk on sound, singing the melody very softly. It means that you sing as though you were speaking." Roland Dick, a radio announcer of that time, used to say that Crosby "sounds as if he were leaning over the piano in your own parlor singing to you." Similarly, Charles Henderson, in "How to Sing for Money," wrote of Crosby that "You get the feeling that he's letting you in on something very important to you, something he wants to tell you about, now that you and he are alone

together." Henderson coined the term "phonogenic" to describe Crosby's voice. He might have coined "microgenic" too.

with Al Jolson on a Chesterfield show.

The Jolson influence has been overlooked in most assessments of Crosby's early vocal style, probably because critics, and particularly the jazz critics, do not listen to Jolson records if they can help it, and they expel the experience from their memory as quickly as possible when they do. One who has listened attentively to Jolson, however, will recognize the stylistic source of Crosby's slurring, his whistling, his occasional ventures into song speech. They will also recognize, probably not without distaste, the Jolsonesque nasality of the diphthongs in such words as way, may, mine, divine, etc. Crosby, on his early records, sounds most like Jolson, and least like Crosby, when he carries a full voice into the upper part of his range.

The Jolson example was no help to him in belting out the high ones, and it marred many of his recordings. But for the rest. Crosby simply took what Jolson had done and did it more tastefully. Or he transformed it in his own image, not always so tastefully. His slurring, for example, is more appropriate, more expressive, more varied and more musical than Jolson's, reflecting a jazz as well as Jolsonesque stylistic origin. He overdid it from time to time and has had to live with the "groaner" label as a consequence. But it was an important factor in his getting away from the lyrical inhibitions of precise intonation on prescribed pitches.

To the slurs he added (although he could probably not have identified or defined) the mordent, which became an early hallmark of his singing. A mordent is simply the introduction of an unscheduled short note adjacent to the note of destination. The additional note may be the note above or the note below. Crosby's mordents were light and fast, and they produced that effect of a slight catch, or choke, or sob which was to remain one of the most attractive of his vocal devices. Initially he used only the upper mordent. In later years he added the lower, articulating it more slowly and very effectively.

Compared with singers who came after him, notably Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, Crosby's embellishments and his melodic and rhythmic deviations are modest. They were, initially, tentative. One hears in the early records four measures here, four measures there, which forecast the master phraser of the future. In the next measures of the same song he can sound pretty square. He was clearly, if probably unwittingly, working toward that articulation of text and tune, independent of prescribed pitches, note values and bar lines, that now distinguishes the best of American popular singing from any previous vocal conventions in Western Music.

He was also working toward a similar innovative concept of vocal production. He sought melodic and rhythmic liberation in order to sing more intimately, more conversationally. In this he was guided, as Jolson had been guided before him, by the Afro-American and Jewishoral, or oratorical, concept of song. Crosby's most original contribution was the lowering of the voice, not so much in pitch as in intensity, to a conversational level.

None of all this fits, of course, with the image Crosby himself has endorsed of an ordinary Joe with an ordinary voice who had a bit of luck doing no more than most men do in the shower. "It's my hunch," he once said, "that most men think that if they had gotten the breaks I've had they could have done just as well. I don't doubt that there's a lot of truth in that."

I doubt it utterly. What Crosby has to say about his singing, elsewhere in his autobiography, "Call Me Lucky," reveals a conscientious and perceptive student of his own and others' work. Art, according to the old axiom, is that which disguises art. The art of Bing Crosby has been and still is a glorious and delightful illustration of that axiom.

Henry Pleasants

"No man is a hero to his valet"

In searching for some information, I came across the following article in BING 126 (winter 2000). Although I had written it, I had more or less forgot-

ten all about it and I found it quite interesting to read. In the hope that you will too, it is reproduced here. Bing's butler, Alan Fisher, attended our annual meeting at Leeds in 2000 and this is what happened.

These were the words that Alan Fisher used at the beginning of his question and answer session but first some background information.

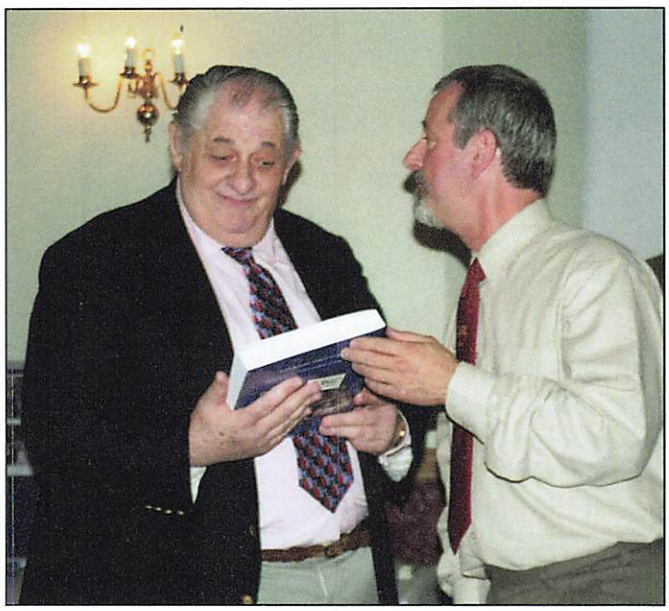
Alan had first started work as a footman at Buckingham Palace and had gone on to work for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. He spent 15 years with the Crosbys and then worked for the Spencer family at Althorp before becoming butler to Prince Charles and Princess Diana immediately after their marriage. He worked for the Prince for three years.

By way of an introduction to his subject, Alan said at the outset that "No man is a hero to his valet" although he admitted that Bing was indeed a minor hero to him. He said that he would be very willing to take any questions we cared to throw at him and he opened by saying that he was never a fan of Bing's singing. However at the London Palladium, Alan used to hurry to the side of the stage to watch Bing's closing 32-song medley and Bing noticed this on one occasion and said "Don't tell me you are becoming a fan." Alan admitted that he might be doing so and Bing replied, "You've left it too late." Bing was dead a week later.

Back at the Crosby home, Bing's children would often ask Alan for his thoughts on Bing's shows knowing that they would get an independent view. The questions flowed easily and Alan told us that Bing lived a very conservative and simple life. The children were brought up that way too. Barry Whittingham asked whether Bing had ever sacked him and Alan said "no" although in his role as butler, Alan said that "I spent his money like there was no tomorrow". He felt that Bing was "a wonderful human being" who did not become aggressive when annoyed but tended to become withdrawn and be terribly quiet.

Alan was asked how he had first got the job as Bing's butler and it seems that he was approached to be butler at Cranbourne Court when Bing and Bob Hope were staying there whilst making *The Road to Hong Kong*. Unfortunately Alan could not agree terms with the intermediary arranging the appointment and another man was recruited. Alan wrote to Kathryn Crosby expressing his sorrow that he had not been able to join them and a few weeks later, Kathryn's secretary telephoned him and asked if he would be interested in working for the Crosbys in California. He was taken to meet Kathryn, then six months pregnant, and whilst he found her incredibly 'theatrical', "within ten minutes I was in love with her." She offered him and his wife Norma a position with them and Alan asked if he could think it over. Kathryn asked that Alan should consider working for the Bob Hopes if he decided not to work with the Crosbys. As we know, Alan picked the Crosbys and he felt that he had made the right decision because on one occasion he was loaned to the Hopes for a big reception they were putting on for Frank Sinatra and Mia Farrow and he found it all a bit chaotic after the order and calm of the Crosby home. Alan explained that inevitably the butler works with the lady of the house and as long as she is happy, the man of the house will be happy too. He was clearly very comfortable working with Kathryn.

Alan talked briefly about his own childhood when as one of five children in a poor suburb of Manchester, he used to go to see the wonderful escapist films of the time (including many of Bing's) which did for the British people of the time what teams of psychiatrists do now. He said that Bing seldom sang in his own home although he would whistle a few bars in the morning as he came down to breakfast which Alan Fisher used as a signal to start serving the meal. The family usually ate together, especially in the evenings when dinner was served at 6:30 p.m. sharp and Bing would say grace. Bing was clearly very fussy about punctuality and an image was created by Alan of an almost Victorian father type regime. The staff were given the weekends off and the cook would prepare some meals in advance which Kathryn could serve. The routine in the house was that the children would wash the dishes at weekends and Alan was instructed not to touch any dishes over the weekend period.



Michael Crampton shows Lionel Pairpoint's radio book to Alan.

Alan was asked about all the stories about Bing's allegedly harsh treatment of the children of his first marriage. He said that he found it very difficult to believe the stories as the most physical display of Bing's discipline he ever witnessed was Bing rolling up a newspaper and banging it on the table and saying "This has got to stop". The second family were certainly brought up strictly with high standards expected which Alan also helped to enforce. Alan said that he almost deserved to be an honorary Catholic because of the times he took the children to mass. But returning to the first family, he said that the boys frequently came to call although never

all together. Alan found them all most charming young men, manly and gracious. He offered this opinion of them to Bing and Bing smiled and said, "Oh yes, they're charming but they've each broken every promise they've made to me." Alan was very annoyed about Gary Crosby's book. Alan said that the boys' mother, Dixie, was very well liked by everyone he met who knew her and she apparently had lovely manners.

We were all surprised to learn that Bing did not play records in the house although he watched all of the major variety specials, including his own. Alan recalled a time when Nathaniel had made a disparaging remark about Ella Fitzgerald and Bing was quick to put him in his place saying that Ella was a wonderful lady and a superb singer. Pearl Bailey often stayed overnight at the Hillsborough house and the children looked upon her as 'Auntie Pearl'. Frank Sinatra, who Bing always called 'Francis Albert' called for lunch on occasion and Alan recalled Bing watching Frank at another time on a special on TV and expressing the view that Frank had perhaps burned the candle at both ends and should probably have retired at his peak.

Alan was asked about Bing's closest friends and we learned that apart from Phil Harris, his friends were mainly captains of industry and oil men. Bing clearly admired those who had succeeded in business rather more than entertainment figures.

The subject of Bing's hairpiece came up and Alan said that Bing only wore it for very formal occasions and never at home. Mary Frances, when a little girl, on seeing her Dad in his toupee said "Daddy, I hate you in your pretend hair" and Bing said "So do I". He had four hairpieces all of which fitted him incredibly well. Alan is amazed that Elton John has not found a better wigmaker! Alan also told an interesting story about Bing during his time at the London Palladium. Alan came into the Crosbys' London flat and found Bing looking like thunder. Alan enquired about the reason for this and Bing said that he had lost his hairpiece. He looked Alan in the eye with his piercing blue eyes and said "If I don't find the hairpiece, I'm not going on stage tonight!" Eventually, the hairpiece was found in a box that the Spanish maid had put in the rubbish and Alan later heard Kathryn telling the maid off in Spanish.

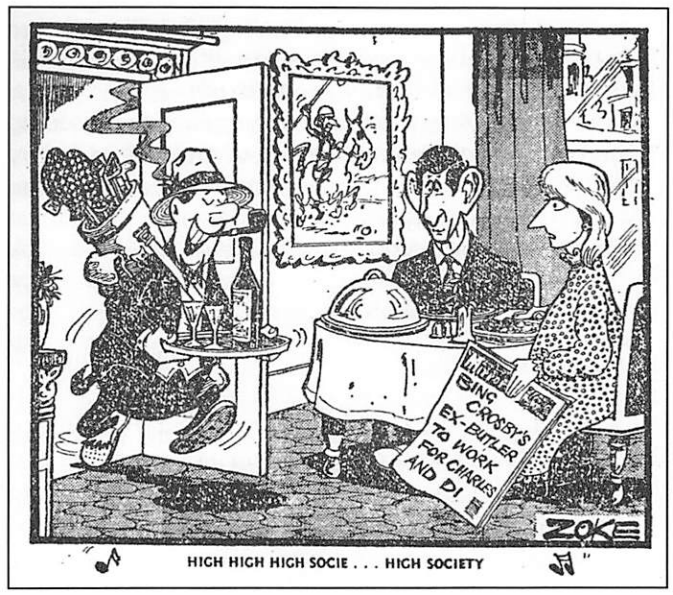
Alan was asked about Bing's political leanings and he said that Bing never aligned himself publicly with any political parties as he did not think it right that he should do so because of the danger of influencing his fans that way.

Alan talked about the night a day or so before Bing died, when at 11:30 p.m., Alan discovered the light on in the drawing room and he reached around the door and switched the light off. Alan was surprised when Bing spoke up because Bing was usually in bed by 9:30 p.m. with a good book. Bing was busily handwriting letters to various fans and again Alan wondered whether Bing had had a premonition about his imminent demise and was anxious to leave matters tidy.

In talking about Bing's clothes, he said that Bing dressed simply but that he would pay, say, $3,000 for a jacket. He laughed as he recalled that Bing would often be seen in a cardigan with holes in the sleeve. Alan discussed how he came on ahead to find suitable accommodation for the Crosbys on the occasion of one of their visits to the UK and how the family trusted his judgement implicitly. He made the point that Kathryn was in many ways an unsung heroine because she was very supportive of Bing and probably accepted situations that other wives would not. Alan quoted an example of Bing deciding at the last moment not to go to a dinner party although Kathryn was all dressed and ready to go.

Kathryn relied on Alan to remember the children's birthdays and buy the presents etc. but it was interesting to learn that Bing himself always went out on his own to buy presents for Kathryn. Alan described how Bing would go into supermarkets himself to buy items for his duck club and this invariably caused a hush to fall over the supermarket.

I asked about Bing's recurring health problems with his kidney stones and Alan explained how they would fly bottles of special water down to the Mexican house which Bing would use for drinking and which was also used for cooking. Bing would never discuss his health or money matters in his home.



We touched briefly on Alan's spell with Prince Charles and Princess Diana. I had recalled a cartoon in a newspaper at the time and Peter Howard kindly sent this to me for reproduction above. Alan spoke very complimentarily about the Prince saying that he was a very fine humanitarian. Princess Diana was very gracious and charming but sadly many of the stories being related by her former Personal Adviser in the press at present are true. Alan related how the Princess had not been very happy about Alan taking part in the TV show about Bing hosted by Barry Norman and had not wanted him to do it. Alan had made a contribution however without the knowledge of the Princess. Later it seems the Prince and Princess were dining with the Queen and the Queen rushed them all through the meal because she

was anxious to watch the Barry Norman programme. One can imagine Diana's surprise when Alan appeared on it but she was complimentary to him about his spot on the show.

Alan gave us two separate sessions and answered our questions frankly and openly in an easy and often amusing style. He had very generously brought along several Bing items such as hats, a pipe and some letters and photos which he wanted to be spread amongst those present. A draw took place and several of us received some wonderful mementoes.

I rose to propose a vote of thanks to Alan for some wonderfully entertaining stories but before I could get to the time honoured words "Please join me in showing our appreciation in the usual way" the audience broke into spontaneous applause to thank a very nice man for a superb evening.

Malcolm Macfarlane

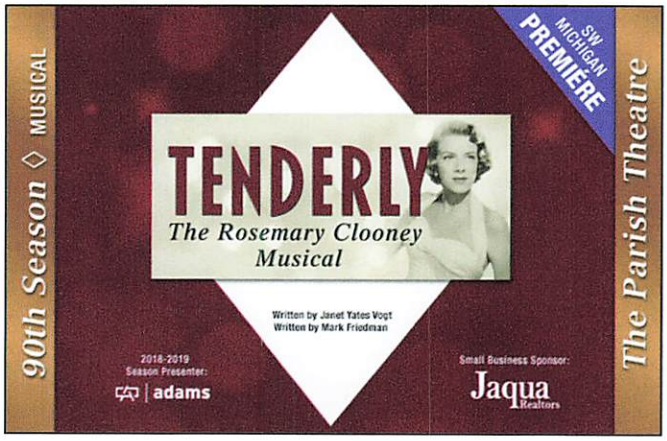
(Editor: I should add that the item I won in the draw was a handwritten letter from Grace Kelly to Bing in 1955. It's probably worth a fair bit of money now!)

"Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical"

Bob and Christina Griffin have been to see this fascinating show and send their review.

The Kalamazoo (Michigan) Civic Theatre presented "Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical" January 11-27 as part of the 2018-19 season. We attended the sold-out 2 p.m. performance on January 13.

The show, based on the life of singer Rosemary Clooney, was written by Janet Yates Vogt and Mark Friedman and directed in Kalamazoo by Gregory Moore. In it, two actors portray Rosemary and her psychiatrist Dr. Monke who explore the ups and downs of her extraordinary career through songs and dramatized flashbacks. The 140-minute play demands a great deal of the two-member cast in terms of emotional range and singing (and dancing) ability. Dr. Monke frequently steps aside to assume an array of characters including Rosemary's husbands, Jose Ferrer and Dante DiPaolo, her priest, her mother, and famed singing stars Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. The performers are supported by a versatile onstage trio of musicians.



Rosemary and her doctor were portrayed by two experienced players from the Kalamazoo area, Mary Teutsch and Hal Hobson-Morse. The many musical numbers associated with Rosemary's career were performed by Ms. Teutsch with convincing sophistication, strength, and sincerity. She looked remarkably like Miss Clooney, with perfectly styled hair and makeup and a selection of colorful 1950s – era gowns.

For us, the most interesting feature of the story was the cordial relationship between Rosemary and Bing. Mr. Hobson-Morse ably conjured up the familiar easy-going persona of Crosby with the aid of a hat, a pipe, and a warm baritone voice, making "How About You" a real highlight of the first act. At its conclusion, "Tenderly" received a well-deserved standing ovation.

Incidentally, Mary Teutsch took the role of "Betty" in the Civic's 2011 presentation of "Irving Berlin's White Christmas" (played by Rosemary in the movie). Director Gregory Moore recently returned home to Kalamazoo after a long and successful career as an opera singer and director in NYC, LA, and London. He formed his own 1930s-themed big band, "Gregory Moore & His Cosmopolitan Orchestra", performing and conducting the "Great American Songbook" catalog of the early 20th century. He was presented with the first Dorothy Loudon Award at the 2009 New York Cabaret Convention in recognition of his effort "…to help keep alive the great music of the 1920s and 30s." Subjects of Mr. Moore's tribute shows include Russ Columbo, Arthur Tracy, and Noel Coward. He was clearly an ideal choice to helm this show for his home town theatre.

Bob and Christina Griffin

Maybe Bing deserves a Spokane birthday bash

Paul Turner, writing in Spokane's *Spokesman-Review* on January 8 had this to say.

Today is Elvis Presley's birthday. Because I once lived in Memphis, that sometimes makes me wonder.

Should Bing Crosby be a bigger deal in Spokane than he seems to be?

Oh, I realize Bing is and always will be an iconic figure here in the city where he grew up. Rightly so. He is a long, long way from being forgotten, here or elsewhere.

But here's the thing. Elvis is practically an industry in Memphis. And though my memories of how that Tennessee city regarded the late singer are of the long-ago variety now, I remember that celebrations of his life were almost inescapable there.

Some of the reasons might be obvious.

Though both singers died in 1977, Elvis was much younger and closer to the height of his fame at that time.

His fan base was/is younger.

Though he spent a lot of time in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, Elvis never stopped living in Memphis.

Crosby had a lake place in Idaho, but Southern California was his adult home.

For those in Britain or Nova Scotia planning a pilgrimage, Memphis is easier to get to.

Because Elvis lived in Memphis as an adult, there are more people still alive there with relevant brush-with-fame stories.

And so on.

I'm not really sure what a heightened level of Crosby appreciation would look like here in Spokane. Beyond the acknowledgements our city already has in place, I mean. Everybody pretending to smoke a pipe on a designated Bing Day? Everybody dressing like Father O'Malley from *Going My Way*?

Maybe it would suffice if more people read the biography of the crooner by Gary Giddins. (The first volume has lots of Spokane stuff.)

Or perhaps we should just be satisfied to let time march on. Spokane has occasionally been accused of living in the past, after all.

Paul Turner

(Editor: Well said, Paul. I emailed him supporting his suggestion and let's hope it comes to fruition.)

This year, 250,000 Americans won't be home for Christmas

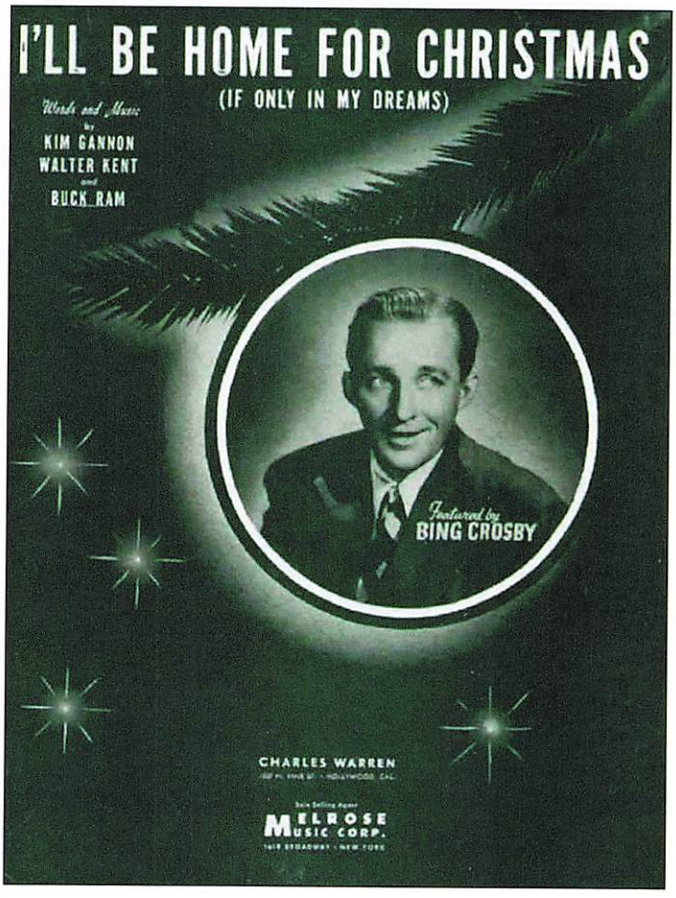
Lt. Col. ML Cavanaugh writing in the LA Times on December 24 remembered a special Crosby Christmas song.

Bing Crosby will forever remind me of a giant Latino sergeant I served with in the Army on my first deployment to Iraq in 2003. A full head taller than me, his huge right hand resembled a meat cleaver when he saluted. Tough? Sure, but he was equal parts genial, and his Grand Canyonesque grin put us all at ease. And there was this quirk: In December, he loved to play the original version of "I'll Be Home for Christmas" over and over, and over. He got more than one soldier to cry.

It was a twisted, holiday version of the age-old game of Say Uncle. Not suitable for those without a steady soul, sometimes it was hard to take. Eventually, most broke. He had weaponized Bing Crosby's voice and Kim Gannon's lyrics.

Of course, we weren't the first soldiers to hear a Crosby tune abroad. Seventy-five years ago this Christmas, "I'll Be Home" was first heard by American troops serving in World War II around the globe. Crosby had recorded the song for Decca Records on Oct. 4, 1943, accompanied by the John Scott Trotter Orchestra. It spent 11 weeks on the charts and reached No. 3.

The small song packs a powerful punch. It contains a mere 39 words, five or less per line. The entire song lasts less than three minutes. "Christmas" is repeated three times to reinforce the holiday theme. The writing's sparse simplicity still stuns listeners.



Gannon wrote the song as if from the hand of a deployed soldier sending a letter home: "I'll be home for Christmas, you can plan on me."

It acknowledges the painful privilege that often defines military service — longing for home, against the uncertainty of life in a war zone. And when the song closes with Crosby's captivating voice — "If only in my dreams" — reality sets in: *if only*.

For soldiers, the worst part is simply not knowing. Fifteen years ago, in the Iraq War, we were given so many different dates. When we arrived in early April 2003, we thought we'd be home by October. Then it was November. Then early December. That's when the dread sank in. We weren't going home anytime soon.

But that's a soldier's life. And in just a few lines, "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and Crosby's croon captures the essence of that pain. And sometimes, in song, hard truth beats soft fiction, which might explain why a major magazine poll in 1945 had GIs voting Crosby the one person that had done the most for their morale while serving overseas.

Not everyone was a fan. Our British allies banned the song from BBC airwaves under a policy that excluded material considered too gauzy or sentimental. They thought it might hurt troop morale. Maybe the BBC should have listened to their own prime minister, who, during the war, famously pointed out that the British people were more resilient than "sugar candy."

That same resilience persists on the front lines today, and it's why one thing is certain this holiday season: There's some soldier out there with my old sergeant's sensibilities. In 2018, around 250,000 Americans will spend Christmas in a foxhole, on a bunk or aboard a ship, swaddled in some sort of camouflage. I'm sure a good number of them will be listening to "I'll Be Home for Christmas" on repeat.

And yes, my sergeant got me to cry in Iraq. It took a while, but the tears came. I didn't make it home that Christmas, and I knew so many who, Christmas aside, would never make it home at all.

ML Cavanaugh

Lt. Col. ML Cavanaugh is a non-resident fellow with the Modern War Institute at West Point, and co-edited the book, with Max Brooks, "Strategy Strikes Back: How Star Wars Explains Modern Military Conflict."

The Crosby Building

Bob Phillips recently gave us details of the fight to save the historic building on Sunset Boulevard and there have been further developments. Natalie Hoberman writing in The Real Deal, a business news publication that reports on both residential and commercial real estate on December 3, updates us.

Amid bribery allegations facing one of its co-founders, developer Charles Co. is trudging forward with plans for its eye-catching hotel tower on the Sunset Strip.

The firm is looking to build a taller, 22-story building with 237 hotel rooms, as opposed to the proposed 19-story tower with 185 rooms, according to an initial study published by the City of West Hollywood.

The study also revealed that the developers will now retain and relocate the two-story Bing Crosby Building on the site, Urbanize reported. In May, the California State Historical Resources Commission voted to nominate the Crosby Building for the National Register of Historic Places.

Previous plans called for the demolition of the building at 9026 Sunset Boulevard, where the late Hollywood singer and actor had his headquarters. Early videotape technology is believed to have been invented at the property.

Charles Co. will also include 12,500 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and 10 affordable housing units on the 496,000-square-foot mixed-use complex. A parking for up to 547 vehicles will spread across five underground levels.

R&A Architecture + Design is designing the circular, irregularly shaped structure, located at 9016 – 9034 Sunset Boulevard.

In May, federal prosecutors charged Arman Gabay, a co-founder and partner at the firm, of allegedly bribing a Los Angeles County official. Prosecutors said Gabay sent the employee monthly $1,000 payments over six years in exchange for receiving a $45 million county lease at the Charles Co.-owned Hawthorne Plaza mall.

Natalie Hoberman

The Harasen Line

Veteran broadcaster Lorne Harasen from Regina, Saskatchewan interviewed Bing on many occasions and he has been re-listening to the tapes of those interviews. Here are some more memories of those meetings.

Just about every superlative has been used to describe the talent and personality of Bing Crosby, and small wonder. He was an entertainment titan in virtually every branch of show business but his warmth and down to earth friendliness made him a very appealing human being.

I note this because in his conversations with me he was quick to express his admiration and regard for other people including performers he worked with.

Let me start with Robert Goulet who grew up in Canada but was drawn to the United States where he became a popular performer. He appeared in one of the Crosby Christmas specials in which Bing described Goulet as ***"a nice guy and a great fellow to work with."*** Bing added ***"He has a glorious voice and he's a great looking fellow. No wonder he's such a star."***

Louis Armstrong was a friend to Bing whom he called "Pops." They worked together many times. If the racial thing came up on some jobs Bing was quick to say that Armstrong would go into the building through the front door with the rest of them or no one was going in. It was noted that if Bing spent an afternoon working with Satchmo he almost always came home whistling,

When Louis Armstrong died, Bing said ***"He was a great man, an authentic genius who did so much for popular music. He was a blithe spirit, a wonderful man to be with. He was great company."***

Flip Wilson hosted Bing on his television show and Bing was impressed. He said Wilson was a perfectionist. ***"He gets everything well organized, well rehearsed, well staged. Flip knows the material and he's a good editor. He can eliminate things that are going to be deadweight or heavy or not going to play. He has very good taste and he's a very excellent professional, I would say."***

Having fun with Flip Wilson and Dean Martin.

In the early 1970s Bing recorded an album of newer songs with the Count Basie Orchestra. He said, ***"It was great fun working with the Count! I enjoyed making that album. I have been a fan of the band for years.*** Bing noted that the players in the band had been together for a long time. He added, ***"They are well disciplined. These guys know what they're doing. The arrangements were interesting and colorful."***

Bing had some fine words to say about the late Max Bell a Canadian newspaper publisher, a race horse owner and philanthropist. Bing generously noted, ***"Mr. Bell. Yes a dear friend, a man I admired very much and we're sure going to miss him. I'd have to say he's one of the finest men I ever knew in all respects – a humanitarian, a great family man, a good sense of humor, a great sportsman, a kind gentle man, sympathetic - all the qualities you admire most in a human being were to be found in Max Bell, in my opinion."***

Perhaps Bing's most effusive comments about other performers in his chats with me were about singer, comedienne, writer, actress Carol Burnett. Bing made those comments not long after he collaborated with her on a television special. He said, "***She's a great gal and a tremendous talent with lots of gifts.*** As he did with other performers Bing noted that Carol was ***"wonderful to work with. She reminds me of some of the girls in the old days like Carole Lombard. People like that who were good scouts, who were fun to be with and got along with the crew. They are obliging with no temperament, no little fits of frustration. Just a very pleasant girl and as we all know tremendously talented."***

It occurs to me that many of the attributes that Bing Crosby found in other people were also to be found in large measure in Bing himself. I will never forget his kindness to me.

Lorne Harasen

(Editor: Lorne's book about his long career titled, The Harasen Line, A Broadcaster's Memoir was published by FriesenPress, Suite 300 – 990 Fort St., Victoria British Columbia, V8V 3K2 Canada (www.friesenpress.com, e-book $4.99, paperback $18.99. Hardcover $29.99). To order it, either go to the publisher direct or order from Lorne at 86 Marquis Crescent, Regina Sk. S4S 6J9 Canada.

We shall have another instalment from Lorne in our next issue

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries. Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 715-2018 Robertson Rd., Nepean, Ottawa, ON, K2H 1C6, Canada.

Gord's latest book "The Golden Years of Entertainment" is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. Write to Gord direct.

John Bassett, "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

"Alternate Bing Crosby – Vol. 2". Issued as a companion volume to Colin Pugh's invaluable 1988 publication, this 67-page edition continues the story by examining every alternate Take discovered since that first edition. In total, 131 titles are dealt with in this A4 size publication, currently available at £7.50 (including postage). All remittances in £ sterling should be made payable to John Bassett and sent to him at the address above.

Lars Schinnerling, Forstring 172, 63225 Langen, Germany or via email: lschinnerling@gmx.net.

Wanted for exchange: I have a large collection of chronological Big Band recordings, mainly 30s and 40s, on LP and CD (Joyce Record Club, Chronological Classics and others) and seek to swap recordings with likeminded collectors in order to fill gaps. Please contact me direct.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued by the Society and they can now be received in PDF form by email if desired. The regular film nights continue and in December the compilation "A Bing Crosby Christmas" was shown together with an interview with Bing and extracts from the Vera Lynn Show of 1975. The main support was part 2 of The Hollywood Sound – Music for the Movies. In February, *Variety Girl* was shown with two Bing TV shows, the ones for January 3, 1954 and March 2, 1959. Dates for further film nights are April 16, June 18, Aug. 20, Oct. 15 and Dec. 10. The venue continues to be the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

BING magazine

This contains a considerable amount of reference material all of which is being updated as new information arises. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at: http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/

Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker.

Other sites well worth a visit are:

www.BingCrosby.com - run by Bing Crosby Enterprises

Bing Crosby on Facebook - run by Bing Crosby Enterprises

Bing Crosby House (on Facebook)

Bing Crosby on Twitter - @Bingconstantly and @Bing_Crosby are the links..

Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby—"Der Bingle"--The Bing Crosby Fan Page – a Facebook group.

The Early Bing Crosby 1926-1936 a Facebook group administered by Mike Pearl

Bing Crosby Appreciation Group – run by Gary Rise on Facebook

Jon Oye's Blog – run by ICC stalwart Jon Oye. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive - David Lobosco runs this blog at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum - See http://www.stevenlewis.info/crosby/

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/) - A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

International Al Jolson Society, c/o Sandra K. Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (website: www.jolson.org - also on Facebook). A different Jolson radio show can be heard via the web site each week.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Memory Lane, P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk)

The acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £16 - UK, £22 - overseas.)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/).

This was founded in 1955. A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

Books 'n' Bing

Swinging on a Star – The War Years 1940-1946

By Gary Giddins, published by Little Brown and Company, 736 pages, ISBN-10: 0316887927, ISBN-13: 978-0316887922, Available from Amazon - $25 in the USA, £35 in the UK. Also available as a Kindle.

The new book from Gary Giddins has had a tremendous amount of favourable coverage and influential writer Terry Teachout writing on the Commentary Magazine web site last October had this to say about it.

The Swinging Star
Why is Bing Crosby forgotten?

In the 41 years since he dropped dead on a golf course at the age of 74, Bing Crosby has become the forgotten giant of American popular culture. Among millennials, he is barely even a name, even though he was the most successful and influential pop singer of the first half of the 20th century. Crosby recorded 396 hit singles, 41 of which topped the charts—yet only one, his 1942 "creator recording" of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas," the bestselling record of all time, continues to be heard regularly. He was also the most popular movie star in the world for five consecutive years between 1944 and 1948, a record topped only by Tom Cruise—yet few of the four dozen feature films in which he starred are still shown with any frequency on TV, and most of those, like *Holiday Inn* (1942) and *High Society* (1956), are mainly remembered for the presence of such co-stars as Fred Astaire and Frank Sinatra.

The jazz critic Gary Giddins sought to change this by publishing in 2001 the first installment of a multivolume primary-source biography whose purpose was to reintroduce Crosby to modern listeners and make the case for his permanent significance as an artist. Despite certain shortcomings, *A Pocketful of Dreams: The Early Years, 1903–1940* was generally and, for the most part, justly praised. Had Giddins brought out a second volume with sufficient promptness, he might well have accomplished his goal. But as the years went by without a sequel, Crosby's reputation all but vanished

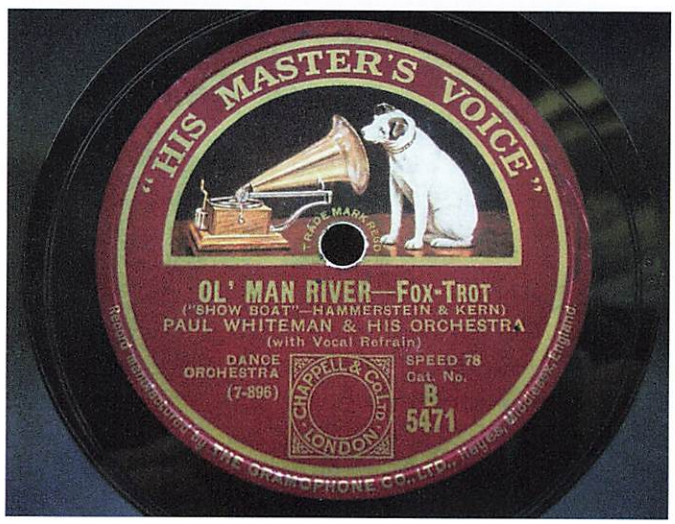
into the grave along with the last living veterans of World War II, among whom he was so admired that it was no exaggeration that his otherwise modest tombstone describes him as "beloved by all."

Even so, Giddins persevered, and he has now given us *Swinging on a Star: The War Years, 1940–1946*, which will presumably be followed at some unknown point in the future by a third volume.[1] But while *A Pocketful of Dreams* covered a 37-year span, *Swinging on a Star* devotes a like amount of space to the next six years of Crosby's life—eventful ones, to be sure, but not so much so that it would have been impossible to tell their tale far more concisely.

The fact that Crosby had three simultaneous careers—as pop singer, movie star, and host of a weekly radio series—and an eventful private life makes his story difficult to tell in a coherent way. And while it is a tribute to Giddins's literary skill that *A Pocketful of Dreams* and *Swinging on a Star* are consistently readable, it is no less true that he has a tendency to let the piling of fact upon fact obscure the main line of his 700-page narrative.

Still, readers who want to know as much about Crosby as Gary Giddins wishes to tell us—among whom I count myself—will find *Swinging on a Star* a compelling study of the middle years of a popular artist who by the end of the Second World War was so closely identified with the American national character that he seemed to embody it.

In his youth, as Giddins explains in *A Pocketful of Dreams*, Bing Crosby had been a jazz singer, one of the very first—and very best. As a member of Paul Whiteman's orchestra, with which he performed from 1926 to 1930, Crosby listened closely and comprehendingly to Bix Beiderbecke and other noted white jazzmen, and he was also profoundly influenced by Louis Armstrong, who was as important a vocalist as he was a trumpeter. Even when Crosby sang the ballads that his fans increasingly favored, his still-developing style was notable for its light-footed rhythmic swing and improvisational freedom, as can be heard on the records of Jerome Kern's "Ol' Man River" and "Make Believe" (both from *Show Boat*) that he cut with Whiteman in 1928. In addition, his microphone-amplified baritone voice was unabashedly masculine at a time when most male pop singers were, like Rudy Vallée, effete-sounding tenors.



This combination of traits electrified his listeners. By 1931, Crosby was America's biggest singing sensation, adored by the public and admired by musicians. In that same year, CBS gave him his own radio show, and for most of the next quarter-century he would be heard weekly from coast to coast. At the same time, he began to appear in movies, revealing himself to be a natural screen presence with a flair for comedy that compensated for his undistinguished physical appearance (he had a dumpy figure and a receding hairline that forced him to wear hats or a toupee in front of the camera). He became so successful as a recording artist and a star of film and radio that in 1933 he stopped performing in front of live audiences, thereafter concentrating on his burgeoning career in the electronic media.

Throughout the '30s, Crosby's on-screen persona was that of a likable but unscrupulous scapegrace whose casual charm made him irresistible to women. But there had always been more to his artistry—as well as to his off-stage personality. Classically educated by Jesuits, he was intelligent, well-read, and devoutly religious, and his intense, expansive 1932 recording of E.Y. Harburg's "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" is one of many performances from the '30s that do far more than hint at the passion that underlay his deceptive nonchalance. He also had an iron will that gave him what he described in *Call Me Lucky*, his 1953 memoir, as "the habit of facing whatever fate set in my path, squarely, with a cold blue eye." This coldness was invariably mentioned by those who, having met Crosby, were startled by how distant he was in person. As for his will, it was so strong, he was able to bring under unaided control the taste for liquor that had pushed him as a young man to the brink of alcoholism.

None of these qualities, however, are apparent in Crosby's work as an actor prior to World War II, by which time he had starred in two dozen feature films, all of them fluffy comedies. And while he also became the host of NBC's *Kraft Music Hall* in 1936, that hugely popular weekly radio series was a music-oriented program that is of interest today mainly because he performed many songs on the air that he did not record commercially. It was in the recording studio that he made his most persuasive claims on the attention of posterity—and that he first came into his own as a mature artist.

In 1934, Crosby signed with Decca, a new record label launched by Jack Kapp, a producer with an uncanny knack for gauging mass taste. Kapp believed that Crosby, popular as he already was, could become even more so if he downplayed the jazzy side of his singing, opting instead for a simpler, more lyrical style and embarking on what Crosby later described as a "diversified record program…that embraced every type of music." Trusting in the sureness of Kapp's instincts,

he put his recording career in the producer's hands. It was a decision he would never regret.

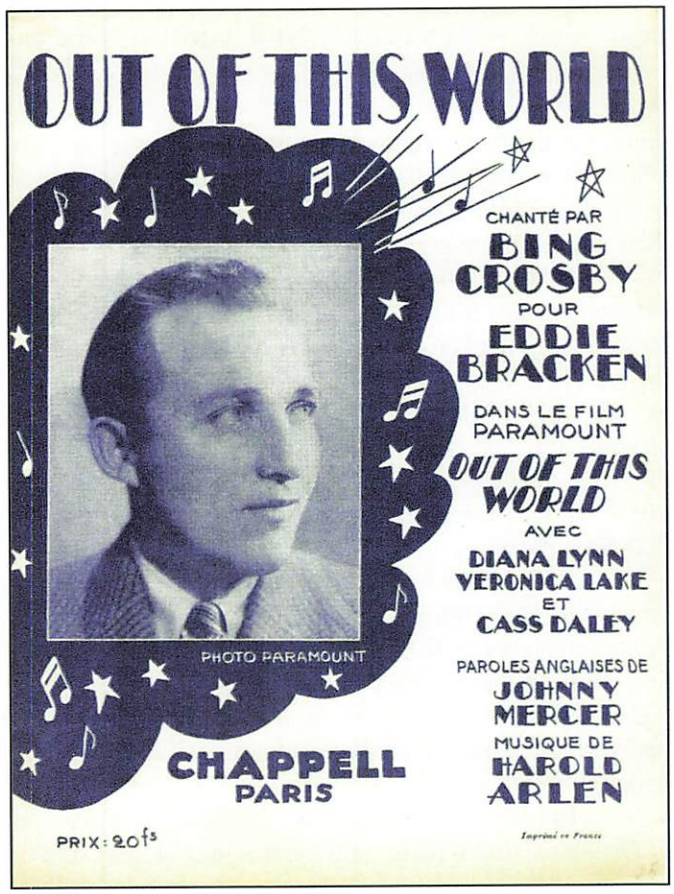
Along with the usual film, show, and Tin Pan Alley tunes, Crosby recorded an astonishingly wide variety of other songs for Decca during the next two decades, among them "Blue Hawaii," "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "Pistol Packin' Mama," "Silent Night," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby)" and "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie." In addition to recording countless solo performances, he was teamed in the studio with a similarly wide range of partners, including Armstrong, the Andrews Sisters, Connie Boswell, Eddie Condon, Xavier Cugat, Judy Garland, Louis Jordan, Mary Martin, Johnny Mercer, and Les Paul. He became a one-man musical melting pot, one whose distinctively American combination of versatility and instant recognizability was a major source of his fame. More than any other popular artist before or since, he was all things to all men, yet he resembled no one but himself.

While jazz would always remain part of Crosby's singing style, his voice grew deeper in the mid-'30s (in part as a direct result of vocal strain caused by overwork earlier in the decade) as well as darker in tonal color, causing him to sound less like a teen idol of the Jazz Age and more like an adult singing for other Depression-era adults. Accordingly, he now took care to steer clear of overt emotionalism—he famously preferred not to sing songs whose lyrics contained the phrase *I love you*—opting instead for a quiet, contained understatement that mirrored his natural reticence.

Unusually for pop singers of the period, this combination of qualities was as attractive to men as it was to women. In *Swinging on a Star*, Giddins cites a passage from W.R. Burnett's 1940 crime novel *High Sierra* in which Roy Earle, a hard-boiled gangster portrayed on the screen by Humphrey Bogart, explains why he favors Crosby's "mellow baritone voice":

He's about the only singer I like. I hate singers. They ought to have on skirts. But not that guy. He's got a real voice and I hear he's right all the way.

It was for a similar reason that Crosby was welcomed so wholeheartedly by the frontline soldiers for whom he performed throughout World War II, not infrequently at real risk to his personal safety. In Giddins's astute assessment, "Bing expressed inborn virility, secure and stoic…restraint carried more weight [with the troops] than amorous histrionics." When those same soldiers returned home after the war, they remained loyal to the man who had done so much to assuage their longing for the world they had left behind.

While Crosby's wartime balladry occasionally flirted with blandness, it was just as often elegant and satisfyingly unmannered. Nowhere is the appeal of his new approach displayed to more persuasive effect than on his 1944 studio recording of "Out of This World," a Harold Arlen–Johnny Mercer ballad, which is at once strikingly unsentimental and singularly beautiful. While his rich, solid tone and chiseled diction "present" the song exactly as written, he floats each successive phrase atop the beat with a subtle rubato reminiscent of the playing of a great jazz instrumentalist like Armstrong or Lester Young.

This style, as Kapp predicted, appealed even more powerfully to Crosby's contemporaries than the unbuttoned singing of his youth. But it took longer, as Giddins chronicles in *Swinging on a Star*, for him to develop a screen persona consistent with the newfound maturity of his singing. On the eve of World War II, his most popular films were the frivolous "Road" comedies that Crosby had inaugurated with Bob Hope in 1940, for which he embodied yet another variation on the same insouciant character he had been portraying on screen since 1931.

It was not until he teamed up with the director Leo McCarey to make *Going My Way* (1944), in which he played a genial but serious-minded priest who rescues a foundering urban parish from bankruptcy, that he was given the opportunity to play a fully developed screen character who was as mature as Crosby himself. In the words of the film critic James Agee, Father O'Malley was "a wise young priest whose arresting resemblance to Bing Crosby never obscures his essential power." The result was a performance which disclosed for the first time that Crosby had real acting talent, a revelation to which Hollywood paid well-deserved tribute the following year by awarding him an Oscar as the best actor of 1944.

No popular artist stays at the top of the heap forever. After the war, Crosby's popularity finally start-

ed to fade, in large part because of the simultaneous rise of Frank Sinatra. Rock 'n' roll finished what Sinatra began, and even though Crosby sang well all the way to the end of his life, his film career dried up in the mid-'50s and he came to be seen as a nostalgia merchant, still beloved but now irrelevant.

Unlike Sinatra, who remains an icon two decades after his death, Crosby can sound on first glance unreachably distant from us today. Not only do most listeners prefer the "confessional" approach of Sinatra to his subdued restraint, but Crosby's records of the '30s and '40s often lack the immediacy and punch of Sinatra's classic albums of the '50s and '60s, mainly because he (and Jack Kapp) usually favored the bland backing of radio-style studio orchestras instead of the vibrant big-band-with-strings accompaniments that were later crafted for Sinatra by Nelson Riddle.

Yet anyone prepared to listen *through* the old-fashioned sound of Crosby's Decca recordings and focus on the singer himself is more than likely to be astonished by his unique blend of emotional delicacy and rhythmic poise. While many of the records themselves, like most of his films, have become period pieces, Crosby the artist remains as accessible and vital as ever, so much so as to put the attentive listener in mind of Artie Shaw's oft-quoted 1992 remark: "The thing you have to understand about Bing Crosby is that he was the first hip white person born in the United States." So he was—and that hipness, like Sinatra's, remains undiminished by the passing of time.

Terry Teachout

(Terry Teachout, Commentary's critic-at-large and the drama critic of the *Wall Street Journal,* is the author of *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (2009) and *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington* (2013). *Satchmo at the Waldorf,* his 2011 play about Armstrong, has been produced off Broadway and throughout America.)

Nothing but blue skies

There were very many other reviews of Gary's book but another one that stands out was by Ted Gioia, writing in the Wall Street Journal on November 8.

During the final days of World War II, a military commander wrote an urgent letter to singer Bing Crosby, insisting he had "something big" to say, "something too big not to have you know and understand."

Crosby was more than familiar with effusive fans. At that moment, he was both the top box-office draw in movies and the most popular singer in America. His latest picture, *Going My Way*, would sweep the Oscars and win one for Bing himself, while his rendition of "White Christmas" was already the best-selling record of all time (a distinction it still holds). Even so, the sober words from this officer weren't the typical stuff of fan letters.

Crosby's music, he insisted, possessed the "power to soften the hearts of the man who so shortly after goes back to shoot down his brother man" and somehow manages to keep "our boys from turning into the beasts they are asked to be." The singer's voice "strikes to the bottom of the hearts of men. I have watched it happen, often, not just in the rare case but in many many thousands of men—sitting silent, retrospective, thoughts flying back to home and loved ones." Somehow, in these barbarous times, Crosby had tapped into the "power of music, put into humble, throbbing words, as these fellows want it, need it, bow to it."

Gary Giddins, Crosby's indefatigable biographer, calls this aspect of his singing "a zone of emotional safety." You could even claim that Bing Crosby invented emotional restraint in popular music. As leader of the first generation of singers to take advantage of the improved microphones of the late 1920s and early 1930s, Crosby grasped better than anyone the potential of conversational delivery. He was cool before cool was hip.

You could hardly find a more striking contrast to the Hitlerian rhetoric of the opposition. I'm not surprised Crosby got enlisted not to fight but to serve as, in Mr. Giddins's words, "an essential voice of the home front." Yet Crosby, who was never as complacent as his public image, also insisted on taking his act into combat. He undertook brutal tours that brought him into danger, often performing during bombing raids and sometimes as close as a thousand yards from the German lines. As a result, Crosby added another honor to his list after the war: In a national poll to pick the most admired man alive, Bing Crosby finished at the top—beating out the pope (Pius XII), the president (Truman) and two legendary generals (Eisenhower and MacArthur). Pretty swell stuff for a crooner from Spokane.

Yet fate is cruel to pop-culture icons once their original audience has died. When Gary Giddins started work on his Crosby biography in 1991, his subject was well-known, a household name even. But I suspect that a survey of music fans today would find that few can identify the entertainer so admired by their parents and grandparents (and, in many instances, their great-grandparents). For Crosby's renown to endure, he needs to make the transition from faded star to timeless artist. Someone has to make the case for Crosby's historical importance—and fortunately for Bing, Gary Giddins has taken up the gauntlet with surprising vehemence. Mr. Giddins is one of the leading music critics of the last half-century, and for many years set the tone for jazz coverage through his influential articles in the Village Voice. His opinions carried such weight that they were often mimicked by other writers within days of publication. He hasn't written many articles in recent years, though—probably because of Bing Crosby.

Mr. Giddins published "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams" in 2001, but this long-awaited book only covered the first half of the artist's life, from 1903 to 1940. Readers have had to wait 17 years for a second

volume—which, as it turns out, focuses just on the period from 1940 to 1946. You can do the math: Mr. Giddins has spent around two-and-a-half biographer years for each Bing year. Crosby lived until 1977, so either Mr. Giddins has to pick up the pace or this project will take until the end of the century to complete.

Yet Mr. Giddins makes a strong case that Crosby's World War II years deserve their own book. Crosby dominated almost every facet of mainstream entertainment during this tumultuous period. His radio program, Kraft Music Hall, entertained Americans at home. His records were in constant rotation on jukeboxes. And when people went to the movies, they invariably preferred his comedies for laughs (especially Crosby's "Road" films with Bob Hope), his musicals for romance and glamour (*Blue Skies* and *Holiday Inn*), and his play-acting as an Irish-American priest (in *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*) for homespun inspiration.

It almost seems like a miracle, suitable for one of these religious films, that Crosby managed this workload while also touring constantly to raise money for the war effort and entertaining soldiers at home and abroad. This is where Mr. Giddins's thorough research pays dividends. By digging into day-by-day and week-by-week itineraries, our biographer demands our admiration for Crosby's unflagging efforts, often with little concern for personal rewards or favorable publicity. I always assumed that Bing Crosby, in private life, was as laid-back as his onstage image. I never knew this workaholic side of his character.

Yet a Crosby biography has also to deal with less-appealing character issues. The entertainer's son Gary accused his father of coldness and abusive treatment, and two of Crosby's other children, Dennis and Lindsay, committed suicide—both with a shotgun. This has left many with an uneasy sense that the Crosby persona of easygoing affability was a façade for a darker private life. Mr. Giddins is surprisingly non-judgmental about this subject—especially when compared to his strong opinions on Crosby's recordings. He chastises the performer when he "misses each and every high note" on a track or comes across as "stale and overemphatic" in delivering a lyric. But Crosby's approach to child-rearing is never directly criticized, and often presented as symptomatic of its time and place. "In the lexicon of postwar psychology, [Crosby] might have been called a behaviorist," Mr. Giddins explains at one point. Whenever possible, Mr. Giddins counterbalances the accusations of Gary with other views—for example, the testimony of his brother Phillip, who declared: "I just don't see there was any way you could have asked for a better father."

But no one can accuse Mr. Giddins of shortchanging us on the facts. Every aspect of Crosby's life is laid bare for close inspection in this penetrating biography, from his tough negotiations with employers to his most casual dealings with servants and staff. I especially enjoyed previously unpublished extracts from a fan's diary that recount minute details of Crosby's life from the

Phillip and Dennis ride the range with their Dad at Elko.

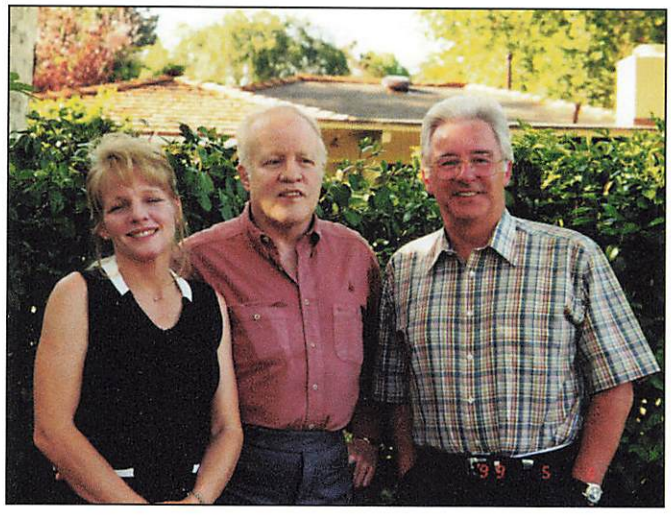
perspective of two sisters who followed him wherever he went. Today they would be called stalkers, but the accounts they left behind offer many insights into how the leading entertainer of midcentury America acted when he thought he was unobserved—almost always with charm, courtesy and an appealing nonchalance. It's hard to reconcile the different facets of this oddly private man who thrived in the limelight while maintaining such reserve. Yet the biggest obstacle to Mr. Giddins's project may be less Crosby's complexity than the sheer fickleness of public renown. Thirty years ago, a book of this sort would have found a huge audience. But nowadays any fans who heard Bing Crosby sing at the peak of his career would be in their 80s, if not older. He could easily be forgotten in a few years' time.

That's a shame. Crosby was not just a celebrity, but one of the most influential performers of modern times. No artist did more to celebrate the sublimity that can come from understatement or the grace derived from keeping cool under pressure. We could benefit from an unflappable champion of serenity guiding our current-day pop culture. I certainly welcomed this reminder that we had one in our midst not long ago.

Ted Gioia

(Mr. Gioia is the author of 10 books, most recently "How to Listen to Jazz".)

(Editor: The chapter titled "Coventry" in Gary's book does not make easy reading especially for our younger members who perhaps did not "enjoy" corporal punishment as the norm when at school. I spent five hours interviewing Phillip Crosby in 1999 and he was adamant that Bing was a great father.



Your Editor with Phillip Crosby and Phil's daughter, Dixie Lee, in 1999

Phil said that his Dad taught him to swim, fish, hunt and play golf. Bing never lied and always spelt out the 'rules of engagement' clearly to them. It was then up to them whether they conformed or not. As we know Gary Crosby had great difficulty in observing these requirements. Even so, Phillip said that corporal punishment was rarely employed by Bing, and Phillip gave me the impression that his mother and the housekeeper could be a bit severe. However punishment usually resulted in privileges being withdrawn.

Speaking personally as a father who has three girls including twins, I can well imagine that Bing would have had to be strict at times to keep order with four lads! During my chat with Phil Crosby I said that he really ought to go public with his views on Bing as a father and some weeks later he did.

> *"My dad was not the monster my lying brother said he was, He was strict, but my father never beat us black and blue and my brother Gary was a vicious, no-good liar for saying so. I have nothing but fond memories of dad, going to studios with him, family vacations at our cabin in Idaho, boating and fishing with him. . . He [Gary] knew it [the book Going My Own Way] would generate a lot of publicity and that was the only way he could get his ugly, no-talent face on television and in the newspapers. He wrote it out of greed. He wanted to make money and knew that humiliating our father and blackening his name was the only way he could do it. My dad took care of us from a very early age with a trust fund. But we blew it all. To my dying day, I'll hate Gary for dragging Dad's name through the mud. My dad was my hero. I loved him very much. And he loved all of us too, including Gary. He was a great father."*
>
> (Phillip Crosby as quoted in *The Globe*, 1999, interviewed by Neil Blincow)

Gary Giddins undertook a promotional tour in November and one of the places he visited was the Bing Crosby House in Spokane and he was captured in this very appropriate photo.

Conversations with Gary Giddins

An interview with Mr. Giddins about his book—hosted and produced by *Jerry Jazz Musician* publisher Joe Maita—was conducted on September 24, 2018 and appeared on the *Jerry Jazz Musician* website on October 25. This was circulated in full to those members whose email address we held and selected extracts are now given here. As I said previously, possibly the hardest part of the book to read is that concerning Bing's relationship with his sons and Joe Maita raised this with Gary.

JJM His role as a husband and father has always been a disturbing part of his biography…

GG Not "always." It is mostly posthumous, because in 1953, when he published *Call Me Lucky* and wrote of spanking and using a studded strap on his kids, the reviews singled out what an exemplary father he was.

A no-nonsense disciplinarian, practically an antidote to a new style of parenting represented by Dr. Spock. It was Crosby himself who blew the whistle on himself and a kind of parenting he came to regret. When he had a second chance with his new family, he was very different with those kids, who speak of him proudly and lovingly. He realized he had made some terrible mis-

takes with the four boys — his strictness, his discipline, corporal punishment, absenteeism, and unreasonable expectations. He tried to make it up to them, but after he married Kathryn Grant, he focused on his second family, taking it with him everywhere, drafting them as performers in his shows. I pull no punches depicting the darkness of his first marriage and some passages are excruciating to read, but there are nuances and complexities to be considered. Every unhappy family is its own tragedy.

JJM His wife Dixie was a complex figure, and as I was reading this book I couldn't help but feel sympathetic toward her. She clearly had alcohol issues, but she was alone all the time, raising four boys…

GG I think you'd have to have a heart of stone not to be moved by Dixie's plight. I've become very fond of Dixie, as indeed practically everyone who knew her was. You see her at her best in *Pocketful of Dreams*, before the problems take their toll. In *Swinging on a Star*, she is drinking heavily at the start and it contributes to her early death. No one, not her friends, doctors, or Bing, knew how to help her. She continued to show moments of great charm and wit.

Bing clowns for the photographers during a night out with Dixie.

She was one of the few people in Bing's life who could stand up to him and match him line for line with spirit and humor. But the marriage reeled out of control during the 1940's. Crosby was away for long spells, sometimes weeks and months, while she was confronted with raising growing boys that she did not know how to handle. Much of their upbringing was delegated to housekeepers and governesses — some of whom were more brutal than Bing or Dixie. Gary tells about one of them who submerged the kids in a bathtub. Luckily, Dixie happened to walk in and kicked her out of the house.

JJM Crosby demanded a divorce in 1941, at which time she promised to stop drinking, but Crosby insisted that she prove it. It is all really sad, but you couldn't blame him for making the choices that he made professionally, especially as they relate to how he felt he was needed to support the country during the war…

GG I don't blame anyone. I try to tell a story as best I can understand it with the material at hand. The reader can decide if he or she wants to don black robes. I would hope not. It is quite true, as you say, that his war work was of immense importance, and it gave him the option of leaving a troubled house. Dixie did not have that option. Her drinking and her reclusiveness were attempts to handle a difficult situation. But at times she rises above it and I treasure those little victories…

JJM Toward the end of your book is this almost bizarre relationship with the Barsa sisters, two young women who were basically stalking him, yet he embraced them, to the point of having them visit his ranch in Elko…

GG *Almost?* I love the Barsas. It's one of my favorite episodes and it fit perfectly with the theme of circularity I spoke of. Violet Barsa honored me with her trust, initially making the diary and other materials available piecemeal and ultimately photocopying it all. After she passed on, her daughter Pam — who was Bing's goddaughter — visited our home with a trunk full of scrapbooks and letters.

There are two things about the Barsas that readers respond to with a kind of shock: first, that these young women are clearly stalking him, as though this was a mere eccentricity that fans did once upon a time, even to the examination of his hotel trash; and second, that he invites them up to his hotel room. Yet he is so above board, treating them like young adults with respect and a genuine interest in their lives. He was not interested in them as fans. It turned out to be a lifelong association, and for me, as a biographer, that diary was a gift from heaven, an amateur surveillance with the ring of truth.

I'm a stickler for corroboration, and the diary never failed in its accuracy and observational detail. There is one passage of them describing Bing waiting in the snow outside the Waldorf for a cab to take him to Grand Central. He doesn't have somebody getting him a cab, he doesn't have a driver waiting, he's just there, waiting like any other guest. He has to wait for a while until he gets a cab and loads his luggage. Then the sisters start running in the snow to the station, which is a few blocks from the Waldorf. When they get there, Bing is aboard the train and they don't see him again for a couple of years. But that image of him alone on the Twentieth Century, making that long, long journey back to L.A., back to the family, and capped by the card that he sent to them at Christmas, signed "Dixie, Bing and the boys," was a natural ending. I couldn't improve on it and didn't try.

JJM You were critical of much of Crosby's post WWII recordings, for example, writing that on many of them his voice was "often arid and hollow. The upper mordents flutter effortlessly, but the phrasing is mechan-

ical and the repertory is maddening." Given your 25-year connection to his work as Crosby's biographer, do you ever find it difficult to be critical of Crosby?

GG No, not at all. I don't have an investment in painting him in a particular way, and if you cannot recognize a bad performance, how can you be certain of acclaiming a good one? I am fascinated by the way Crosby's singing differs, in certain periods, between what he does on the radio and in the recording studio or on prerecords for a film. Sometimes, his voice is just burned out and you delight when he rests it for a few months and returns with his best burnished tones. I mentioned the "Ave Maria" session where he walks in juiced to the gills, with a hole in his pants, clearly thinking about something else because after the session he is going to see Joan Caulfield, and Jack Kapp tells him that he is not going to get this today, we'll do this some other time. A few months later, Bing returns to the studio and kicks "Ave Maria" way into the grandstand, an extraordinary performance, dramatic and lustrous.

You don't need 25 years to know good music from bad. Critical objectivity extends equally, however, to the facts of his life, and that's where the investment in time pays off. You trust your research, you sift for facts, you refrain from glib speculation and mind-reading, you find that sheer persistence will open doors, and a single letter or memo can incline you to reexamine or dismiss a supposition. When I started on Crosby, I was inclined to believe a lot of the terrible things I had read about him. My proposal focused on the idea of a performer who personifies warmth to his public but is cold to his intimates. I started to do interviews and people gave me a different sense of him. Nabokov spoke of inventing Europe, Russia, and America in his fiction. A biographer is confronted with the challenge of inventing a life through language, turning a timeline of facts into a narrative. Crosby was not a saint, and I never wanted to write about a saint. He was a good and valuable man and I enjoyed the time I spent with him. He wasn't a perfect artist, but when he rose to the occasion, he was a great one.

JJM How has this experience of being Crosby's biographer impacted you?

GG It changed my life. I'm a middle-class Jew and a child of the 1960's who loves jazz more than anything in the world and did not expect to devote a third of my life to a working-class Catholic pop singer whose celebrity began to fade shortly after I was born. Except for his jazz recordings with Bix or Louis, I hardly knew Bing. "White Christmas" meant nothing to me, and I rolled my eyes at *Going My Way*, until I attended a screening at Lincoln Center and found how funny and resonant it is. I had to be talked into doing Crosby, having rejected the project for years. But the more I looked into it the more I was attracted to the subject, which after all allowed me to write about music and film, my twin obsessions as a critic, and the more surprises I uncovered about him: his tolerance and racial liberality, his innovative use of technology, the hidden treasures in his filmography, the diversity of his radio work, the brilliance of his recordings, the admirable aspects of his obstinacy, his influence on the course of three networks, the tireless devotion of his work for the armed forces during the war, the modesty that allowed so much of his achievement to be forgotten, not least the remarkable 1944 tour in England and France.

Entertaining in France with Darlene Garner and Joe DeRita.

JJM Will there be a third volume?

GG I hope so, but it will depend a great deal on how this book does. If it does not do well, I don't see the publisher wanting a third volume. I do have two other books under contract, and I need a break. But the research is done, and if there is a demand, I expect to write a third and final volume on Bing Crosby.

JJM Ultimately, what is Crosby's legacy during the 1940 – 1946 era you write about?

GG You can't write a book about relatively recent American history without at least silently weighing its events against those of the present. To most people, his legacy is that of a Christmas singer and as an unlikely partner for David Bowie. I would hope people go back and investigate some of his great films and recordings. I hope readers will enjoy and perhaps marvel at the unity that he embodied. We read ad nauseum of the Greatest Generation in accounts that too often separate the business of war from a home front defiled by racism, anti-Semitism, internment camps, nativism, riots, and a paranoia grinding along beneath the surface, waiting to emerge in the safety of peace. What sore winners we were. How slowly, reluctantly we adapted our vaunted values to our own country. But there were moments of greatness, sacrifice, and inspiration. We recognize it in FDR as well as other statesmen, military figures, and countless heroes among the citizen soldiers. We are charier in recognizing the glorious achievements of citizen-entertainers. Bing Crosby crystallized what was

best in us during some of the darkest years in our history. And as an artist, he has a lot to give us even now.

(Editor: Gary Giddins took part in a number of events about his book and one of those was in November at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York. Martin McQuade went along and here is his report.)

Der Bingle Dialogues

On November 13, 2018, The Graduate Center of The City University of New York in midtown on 5th Avenue hosted a conversation with Gary Giddins, author of *Bing Crosby: Swinging on a Star The War Years 1940-46.* This colloquy in its entirety is available at:

https://vimeo.com/marvicpaulo/review/300885463/5e8b6c7b84

During the Q &A, this reporter, upon expressing to Gary the gratitude of the ICC for his illuminating volume, asked him if Bing was disappointed over his unfulfilled Will Rogers wartime film undertaking. Gary began by offering a summary of this project, mentioning that Bing's Rogers screen test is available on You Tube. He then shared that indeed, the contractual roadblocks that prevented fruition of this personal project, disheartened Bing.

When asked if there were correspondences between Bing and General McArthur, Gary said that he was not aware of any. (Just prior to my question, Gary's digression on *Hey Jude, Hey Bing* prompted my recollection that Paul McCartney once told Howard Stern during a radio interview something to the effect that "Old Dad didn't do too bad by that recording.")

On November 14, The New York Public Library hosted a conversation with Gary and William Kelly, the library's Andrew W. Mellon Director of the Research Libraries. The venue was The Bruno Walter Auditorium at Lincoln Center. The pre-show playlist consisted of mood-setting excerpts from the *VJ Day Broadcast*, which Bing hosted, as well as excerpts from *Philco Radio Time* of May 7, 1947 with Al Jolson and Irving Berlin, courtesy of the Library's Rodgers and Hammerstein Collection of Recorded Sound.

This discussion closely paralleled the previous seminar. One particularly poignant anecdote that Gary shared detailed Bing's deep concern, during his visit to England in August 1944, when a B-24 crashed into the village of Freckleton in Lancashire. Gary explained the significance of the scrapbook that the Barsa sisters maintained, saying that this windfall discovery filled narrative gaps involving 1942-43.

Gary spent much time on *Going My Way.* He made the curious claim that the film is completely devoid of prayer. Gary maintains that this underscores an underlying theme of the film: that our personal deeds and community interrelationships achieve our goals far more effectively than spiritual entreaties. His contention ignores that Father Fitzgibbons says Grace before feasting upon the purloined turkey, and that Bing and Rise Stevens sing the Latin Hymn "Ave Maria," which is the "Hail Mary" set to music.

Bing and Rise Stevens join together on "Ave Maria".

Gary also claimed that "White Christmas" is a secular song, which "takes Christ out of Christmas," even though the very title is a derivative of that sacred name. Gary further suggested that Bing would take issue with what many today regard as a concerted "war on Christmas." One might safely conclude, however, that Bing would be aghast at the current widespread attempts to secularize this holiday. There was another Q &A, during which Gary responded to two of my queries. He answered that the duet recording of "New San Antonio Rose" that Bing made with Bob Wills, which fetched a huge sum at a war bond auction, would most likely never be found. He also elaborated upon the "Bat Bomb" boondoggle, which The Crosby Research Foundation undertook for the U.S. war effort.

Both of these events amplified for all present what this book magnificently achieves, a riveting and lasting testimonial to a monumental facet of an American hero.

Postscript: It was my pleasure to facilitate a book signing for Gary on December 6 at The BookMark Shoppe, in my neighborhood of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

Other Book Notes

In *Scarface and the Untouchable: Al Capone, Elliot Ness and the Battle for Chicago* (William Morrow; 2018) authors Max Allan Collins and A. Brad Schwartz place Bing in early 1930 in the thick of Cicero, Illinois, a Chicago suburb where Al's brother Ralph "Bottles" Capone held sway. *Special agents focused on three of Ralph's Cicero nightspots - The Cotton Club, The Greyhound Inn and The Montmartre Café. These popular "whoopee" joints, known for some of the best jazz in Chicago, hired mostly African-American musicians but catered exclusively to whites...each club had a round-the-clock, heavily armed guard. Pianist Luis Kutner*

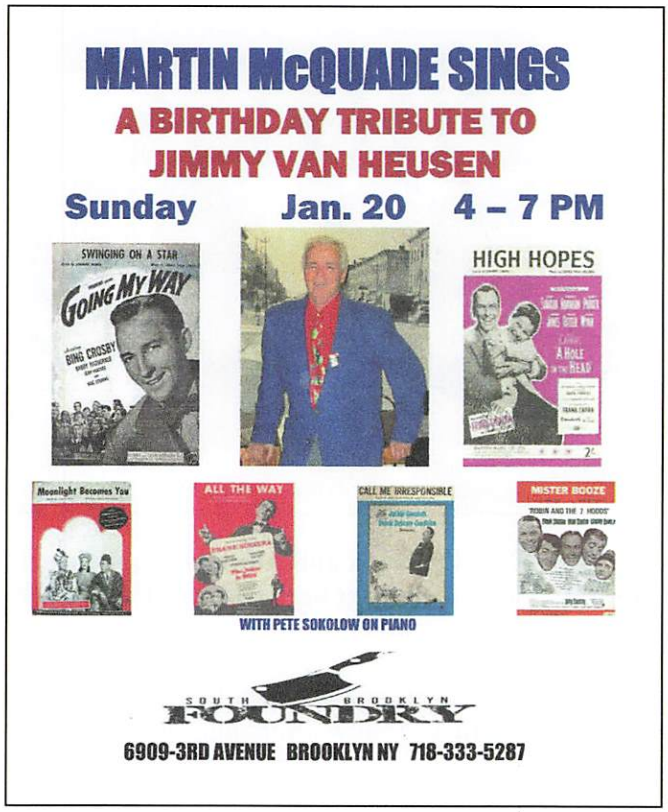
remembered running into three watchdogs during a visit to The Greyhound with an unknown young singer. Chicago made Bing Crosby nervous. And what they found at The Greyhound didn't exactly put him at ease - Capone's "boys patrolling the streets armed to the teeth like a small army." Crosby got out of the limousine and saw all the machine-gun toting mugs and asked Kutner, "Is this a jazz joint or World War 2?"

Robin by Dave Itzkoff (Henry Holt and Co.; 2018) compares Robin Williams and his colleague Billy Crystal, to a certain duo. *Comic Relief* [A charitable organization that arranged shows to raise money for the homeless] *played a crucial role in establishing the personas they played opposite each other. As Crystal described them, they were "bad boy and daddy...He'll look at me and say, 'Dad, have I been bad?' 'Yes.'"...They were their generation's answer to Bob Hope and Bing Crosby...but with a twist: a double act with no straight man, where each competed to outdo the other, a give-and-take-and-give-and-take that could keep going right into the stratosphere.* In 1997, the team was in *Father's Day*, directed by Ivan Reitman, a faint echo of the fabled "Road."

Jimmy Van Heusen tribute

On January 20, yours truly, with pianist Pete Sokolow, paid tribute to Jimmy Van Heusen, a week prior to his 106th birthday, at South Brooklyn Foundry restaurant, in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Naturally, we featured many of the songs he wrote for Bing. This show echoed the tribute from last year, as reported in BING #178.

During the 2018 Christmas season, on December 16, it was my pleasure to present, once again at The South Brooklyn Foundry, *The Radio City Music Hall Christmas Movie Hit Parade.* Pianist Dan Furman accompanied me on many of the songs which appeared in *The Bells of St. Mary's* and all the compositions from *White Christmas*. The latter included "Brothers," Berlin's counterpart to "Sisters." We also performed two orphan tunes: the excised Crosby/Kaye duet song "Santa Claus," as well as



the unused "Sitting in the Sun (Counting My Money)." Irving Berlin composed this song for an unrealized stage musical he began in November 1952, tentatively entitled *Palm Beach*, based on Cleveland Amory's book, *The Last Resorts.* The show was never to be due to conflicts between the two stars who were vying for the lead, Ethel Merman and Mary Martin. Berlin salvaged the composition for Bing to sing, appropriately, in the film's Palm Beach sequence, to emphasize that his character preferred moolah to romance. Perhaps Bing rejected this selection since it is in such sharp contrast to "Count Your Blessings," the envisioned hit of this classic. Louis Armstrong and Frankie Laine recorded the song in 1953 and Sam Cooke in the 60's.

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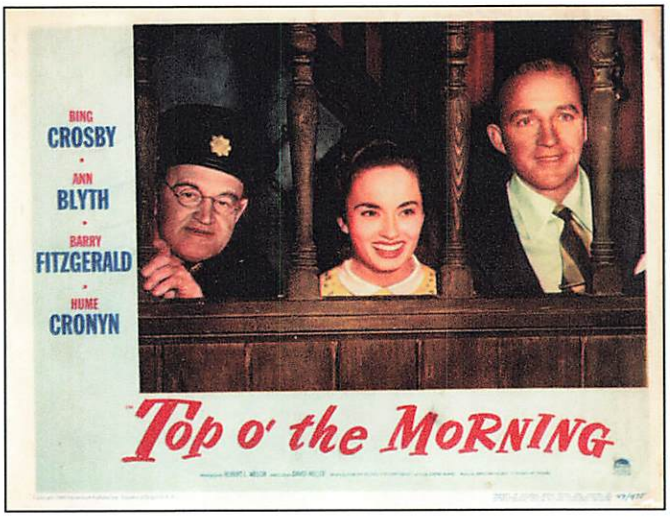
CELLULOID CROSBY

David Lobosco breaks new ground for this column with a look at *Top 'o' the Morning.*

For this edition of Celluloid Crosby, I wanted to make it tougher for me so I picked a film to review that I had never seen before. It is easy to review and write about *High Society* or *Holiday Inn*, but I wanted to look at a film that was not as well remembered as other Crosby films. So that is why I picked Bing's 1949 *Top o' the Morning*. I have had the film on a bootleg DVD for years, but I just never could bring myself to watch the film. I am not sure why, but I finally viewed the film, and it is not too bad. It is not great either.

After making some great Technicolor vehicles like *Blue Skies*, *The Emperor Waltz* and *Connecticut Yankee, Top o' the Morning* looks drab and boring in black and white. I don't know how Paramount could make a movie about colorful Ireland without the film being in color.



Although filmed in black and white, the lobby cards were in color which must have been misleading for those going in to see the film.

The plot is slight, and at times I found the movie surprisingly hard to follow. Although the film has a marvelous cast, it is only mildly entertaining, with the story stumbling along in fits and starts, though it does pick up speed in the last half. Crosby plays a New York insurance investigator sent to Ireland to search for the missing Blarney Stone. Yes, it's been stolen! Barry Fitzgerald plays the ineffectual police sergeant in a nearby town, with Ann Blyth playing his pretty daughter, Conn, and Hume Cronyn is his assistant, Hughie. John McIntire, who later appeared in Blyth's charming comedy *Sally and Saint Anne* (1952), plays a police inspector working on the case.

The original name of the film was supposed to be *Diamond in the Haystack.* Very little happens in this rather slow-moving film, which spends a great deal of time on the mysterious prediction of a townswoman (Eileen Crowe) regarding who will marry Conn; eventually, of course, the Blarney Stone mystery is solved and true love prevails.

Even though I am of Irish descent, I did not really know what the Blarney Stone was. Wikipedia tells us that the Blarney Stone is a block of Carboniferous limestone built into the battlements of Blarney Castle about 8 kilometers (5 miles) from Cork, Ireland. According to legend, kissing the stone endows the kisser with *the gift of the gab* (great eloquence or skill at flattery). The stone was set into a tower of the castle in 1446. The castle is a popular tourist site in Ireland, attracting visitors from all over the world to kiss the stone and tour the castle and its gardens.

Back to the film, Bing looked quite bored in the film as if he was going through the motions of a substandard script. I do not know if it was because of the age difference of Bing (45 when it was filmed in November / December 1948) and his co-star Ann Blyth (then 21), but their pairing did not seem to gel to me, and they did not have too much chemistry. Bing had wanted Deanna Durbin to costar in this picture and in his previous vehicle for Paramount, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1949). Miss Durbin, destined to retire from the screen with the finish of her Universal-International contract on August 31, 1949, declined both offers from Bing. In place of Miss Durbin, Universal loaned Ann Blyth to Paramount for this film.

Bing and Ann Blyth in a publicity shot for the film.

This was the third pairing of Bing and Barry Fitzgerald. They had hit movie gold twice with their pairing as priests in the landmark film *Going My Way* in 1944, and as doctors in *Welcome Stranger* in 1947. Paramount figured that three times was a charm, but it was not exactly. The best part of the film was the interaction between Bing and Barry Fitzgerald, but the script did not allow for much of the friendly banter that was seen in their previous two films together. Personally, I feel they should have made Bing and Barry Fitzgerald both policemen – one young and one old – who had to settle the case of the missing Blarney Stone, using new techniques and old techniques of investigation to crack the case. I was not around in 1949, so Paramount was not able to ask me for my script recommendations!

Like many of Bing Crosby films, the singing was the major draw of the film. My favorite number was Bing singing "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling". Bing did not record the number for the movie soundtrack, but he did record it a few years before the film was made, on May 7, 1946. The songwriting team of Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke were commissioned to write new songs for the film, but only two songs were written. They wrote the title song "Top o' the Morning", which was my favorite song of theirs from the film. Bing must have liked the song too, because he sang it three times in the movie. The songwriters also wrote a pretty forgettable ballad called "You're in Love with Someone", which Bing sang, and then it was sung later in the film as a duet with Bing and Ann Blyth. Rounding out the music were traditional Irish songs like "Kitty of Coleraine", "The Donovans", and "Oh, 'Tis Sweet to Think".

Bing sings "Kitty of Coleraine" whilst incarcerated at the local police station.

Bing was in fine voice towards the end of the 1940s, and as always, he was his charming self in the movie, so he cannot be blamed for this misguided film. Bing did however personally select David Miller as director of *Top o' the Morning*. Groucho Marx recommended him to Bing. Miller had just completed what turned out to be the final Marx Brothers' film. It was *Love Happy*, the least revered of all the Brothers' films. I think also movie audiences were changing as television was beginning to take hold.

Some of the critics liked the film though:

Bing Crosby, after two lush Technicolored musicals, has been handed a light, frothy and more moderately budgeted picture by Paramount to cavort in, which should put him once more at the top of that studio's breadwinning list.

...Under David Miller's light-handed direction, Crosby and the rest of the cast fall right into the spirit of the story. Groaner, despite his having to play to a gal (Ann Blyth) who is so obviously younger, is socko. His easy way with a quip, combined with his fine crooning of some old Irish tunes and a couple of new ones, is solid showmanship.

...Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen have cleffed two bright new tunes for the film, both of which, with Crosby to introduce them, should get plenty of play. "You're in Love with Someone," a ballad, has the edge but the other, "Top O' the Morning," has the lilt that Crosby fans go for. Crooner also gets a chance to dispense a round of traditional Irish airs, ranging from "Irish Eyes" to the lesser-known but more sprightly variety.

(*Variety*, July 20, 1949)

In my opinion, *Top o' the Morning* is not a great Crosby movie, but even a poor Bing film is worth viewing. The last fifteen minutes of the movie are the best, and some of the plot is pretty sinister for a lighthearted Bing film. Bing and the cast did the best they could with the script. My copy came from a showing on AMC Network in 1998, and now TCM has also shown the film, so if you get a chance, check out this slight Bing film. Not great, but pleasant enough.

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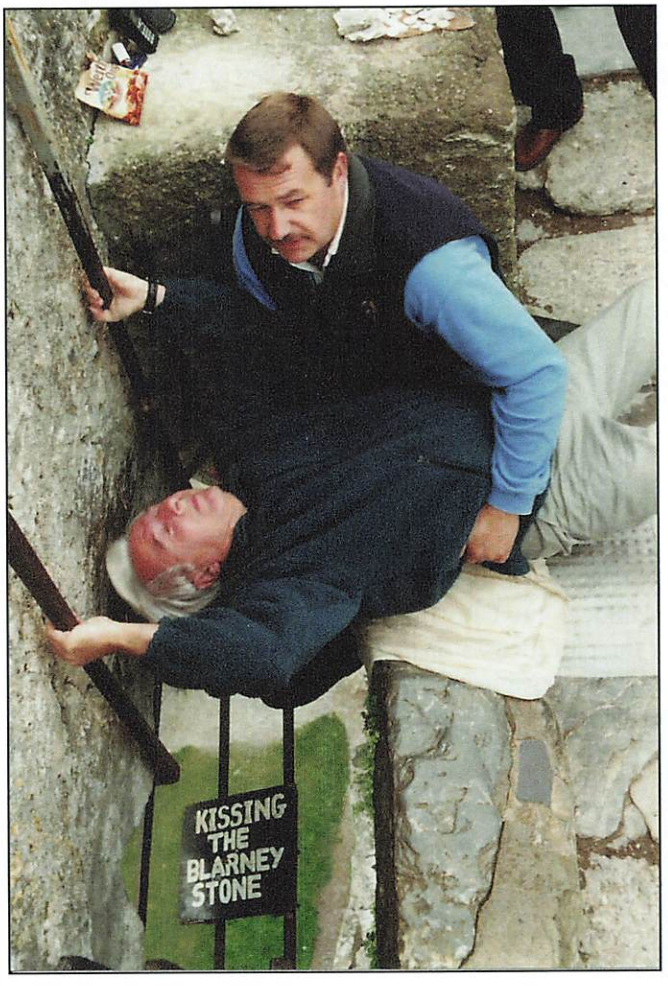
(Editor: It was indeed surprising that the film was made in black and white. Paramount probably hoped that the public would flock to see Bing's movie regardless and they no doubt saved a lot of money initially by not using Technicolor. A short-sighted mistake.

I kissed the Blarney Stone in 1999. It was not a very pleasant experience. You have to make your way up onto the battlements of the castle. Then you have to lie down and lean backwards under the parapet to kiss the rather unhygienic stone while someone holds you. My wife photographed the event.)



A very uneasy Editor attempts to obtain the gift of the gab.

How I learned to stop worrying and love 'White Christmas'

It was very pleasing to see that *White Christmas* had many showings at cinemas throughout the United States in December. This prompted writer Monica Hesse to take an unusual look at the classic film in her column on December 7.

White Christmas — the 1954 battle ax of holiday movies, starring Rosemary Clooney, Danny Kaye, Bing Crosby and Vera-Ellen — offers a case study in grappling with our nostalgia for the not-so-good old days.

While the rest of you get sucked into *The Christmas Prince* sequel or debating whether one can enjoy *Love, Actually* in a post-#MeToo era, a small subset of the rest of us must now retreat to a snow-starved Vermont inn and discuss a more ancient cinematic matter:

White Christmas, the 1954 battle ax of holiday classics, which already reigns over basic cable this time of year, is returning to the big screen — part of a nationwide Turner Classic Movies promotion on Dec. 9 and 12.

Frankly, it's a bit of a weird movie to have achieved such stature in the Christmas pantheon. There are no cute child stars and no Santa Claus — but there *is* a modern dance sequence in which Danny Kaye runs around with a bunch of barefoot women in gray tunics. There's also Bing Crosby improvising a monologue about liverwurst sandwiches, some bombs falling on World War II Europe, and legendary composer Irving Berlin painting himself into lyrical corners resolved by rhyming "finger" with "humdinger."

"I saw you put [the tickets] in your pocket!" Crosby accuses Kaye after they've cross-dressed their way out of a jam and then escaped on a train. "I must have left them in my girdle," Kaye replies. The movie really only meanders into Christmas territory in the last scene. Most of the plot focuses on Crosby and Kaye as Army buddies turned entertainers trying to save a struggling ski lodge owned by their former general.

For the *White Christmas* obsessives among us, the Internet has opened rabbit holes: We can report that co-star Vera-Ellen does, in fact, wear turtlenecks in *every single scene* — the fan theory is that an eating disorder prematurely wrinkled her neck. But we'll also report that a year after *White Christmas*, she was photographed at a different movie premiere and her exposed neck looked smooth — so, who knows?

What is the greater meaning of *White Christmas*? Is it even worth dissecting, or should we admit that it's best appreciated as gift-wrapping background noise?

Suffice it to say, if you've read this far, you might be open to exploring.

The main things a modern viewer might notice about *White Christmas* are what a modern viewer might notice about any 64-year-old movie: the dated, cringey stuff. The 25-year age gap between Bing Crosby and love interest Rosemary Clooney, for example. Or the fact that while the characters blessedly do *not* put on a blackface minstrel show, as they did in the movie's spiritual predecessor, *Holiday Inn*, they do perform a new number in which they sing about how much they like *watching* minstrel shows.

A cynic, meanwhile, could argue that the movie's central quest is merely one long capitulation to male fragility. The retired general, an older man suffering economic anxiety, if you will, worries that he's no longer as respected or vital as he once was, and so hundreds of other people put aside their own holiday plans and come to Vermont to bathe him in adoring nostalgia.

But meanwhile, Vera-Ellen and Danny Kaye in "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing" is one of the greatest dance sequences ever to appear on screen.

And meanwhile, good luck not tearing up at the end.

White Christmas, like a lot of holiday classics that get replayed on your TV every year, has an awful lot of "meanwhile." Moments wherein we, the viewers, are forced to encounter our country's complicated history, right alongside medleys of our most cherished songs sung by our most beloved stars. An awful lot of moments that get so much right, but meanwhile getting so much wrong. In the same way that "Baby, It's Cold Outside" is now dragged as a ballad of rape culture — but meanwhile, it remains compulsively hummable.

To experience a beloved classic at Christmas is to be confronted by the darker side of our own nostalgia. How much do we excuse because "times were different"? How much do we boycott?

I'm thinking of this in a week in which the nation mourns a former president, a very old man who came of age in the 1940s, whose legacy of public service was complicated at the end of his life by multiple allegations that he'd groped women's rear ends while posing for photographs. Was this a corny joke? Or harassment? A corny joke we'd now recognize as harassment? How do we reconcile our thoughts about him?

I've seen *White Christmas* at least 20 times, but it had been a few years. So when I queued it up this week it was with a sense of dread, trying to remember what corny, problematic jokes I'd earlier ignored or let sail over my head. Trying to figure out how to deal with 1954 in 2018.

I wonder whether one answer lies in a throwaway line delivered by a throwaway character — a line I'd never even paid attention to before. Crosby and Kaye have contacted a television host, asking for his help in honoring the general. "I love the idea of doing something for the old man," the host agrees. "If it weren't for him, I wouldn't know how to peel a potato."

And you know what? Bless this fictional 1954 man for having kitchen skills. Bless the fictional general for teaching him. Bless the Army for instilling domestic know-how in these male characters; in another scene, the general obligingly announces that he's on KP duty.

The General on KP duty.

Moments like that are how social changes are made: Cleaning and root vegetable preparation aren't lady skills, they show us, but life skills.

Once you notice that line, you'll latch onto other moments. Kudos to Vera-Ellen's character for deciding that her own career was important and valuable. And for boldly making the first move in her flirtation with Danny Kaye. His character then demurs so vehemently that, the *White Christmas* message boards have speculated that the character might be gay. Well, if so, kudos to that subversive choice, too.

When we talk about old relics of our culture, it's easy to talk about them in a way that's black and white: to shun them or praise them. To denounce them, or to defend them and accuse everyone denouncing them of being sensitive snowflakes.

Around the holidays, denouncers and defenders often end up sitting side by side on family sofas, watching the same movies and seeing completely different things.

To the defenders on one side of the sofa, here's a reminder that it's possible to love something deeply — obsessively, even — and, because you love it so much, to wish that it were better. To point out its flaws, and demand its improvement. It's true of old movies, it's true of historical figures, it's true of culture, it's true of America.

To the denouncers on the other side: Remember the potato peeling. In moments of extreme stress, look for the moments when the men of 1954, real and fictional, were overjoyed to learn how to peel a potato. There was hope. Everyone could come together to save the hotel and the kind old general. It would snow at the end.

Monica Hesse

(Monica Hesse is a columnist writing about gender and its impact on society. For more, visit wapo.st/hesse.)

Fleeting Glances

Martin McQuade returns to our pages to outline some interesting possible Crosby film links. Bing in a film with Marilyn Monroe!

Don Siegel's 1962 Paramount film *Hell Is for Heroes* starring Steve McQueen features Bob Newhart as Lt. James E. Driscoll, a clerk typist who stumbles upon a lost squad of the 99th Infantry Division holding off the Germans along The Siegfried Line in the fall of 1944. In an attempt to fake the enemy, Driscoll improvises remarks to a non-existent command through an uncovered bugging device that the Germans have planted inside the encampment.

This is Lt. Driscoll, the entertainment officer. About the morale, sir - it's been rather low. The main complaint seems to be about the evening movie. Yes sir, I've had to show Road to Morocco now five evenings in a row, sir. Well, the men are beginning to get a little surly, sir. Yes sir, they know all the lines. Explosions halt the microphone subterfuge.

Billy Wilder's ribald farce *Kiss Me Stupid*, a 1964 United Artists release, begins with Dean Martin as "Dino" singing "S'Wonderful" at The Sands in Las Vegas. He intersperses his rendition with wisecracks, such as this example. *I guess you all know this is my last night here. Tomorrow morning I'm going to Hollywood to make a new picture with me, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis and Joey Bishop called Little Women. But before that I'm gonna do a TV special with Mr. Bing Crosby. Now, why Bing works so hard I'll never know. He's got 21 million dollars* - (pause) - *on him.* The audience and waiters respond with uproarious guffaws. While en route to Los Angeles for the special, "Dino" gets embroiled in the sordid machinations of the plot.

In Joseph M. Newman's 1950 film noir *711 Ocean Drive,* partially shot in Palm Springs, a female police stenographer's inability to fully decipher a wiretap results in this incredulous response from a lieutenant on the case. *What's the matter? If it's not Bing Crosby, you don't like it?*

Following the Sun Straight Down the Middle

Sidney Lanfield's 1951 20th Century Fox release *Follow the Sun* chronicles the career of legendary golfer Ben Hogan. Glenn Ford portrays Hogan, and Dennis O'Keefe plays a fictional rival, Chuck Williams, whom Jimmy Demaret may have inspired. (Demaret, in fact, appears as himself in the biopic.) Anne Baxter depicts Hogan's "golf widow" and her narration weaves throughout, as during a montage covering Hogan's rapid post-war rise, *The caravan and the years rolled on. Then came 1948, and my man began to hit his stride. Yes, the dreams of that boy from Fort Worth, Texas were being realized. Ben had become a champion, a great champion. But very deep in his heart and mine was the unhappy thought that he wasn't a popular one. But always hopeful that someday, somehow he'd be both, we continued to*

follow the sun to beautiful Pebble Beach in Del Monte, California for the annual Bing Crosby tournament.

This reminiscence segues into an extended scene that appears to take place at the actual location, and might even have been filmed at a recent "clambake."` Throngs of fans follow Hogan as they debate whether his drive may have possibly gone into the ocean. Williams, frustrated while in close competition with Hogan, says after a flawed stroke, "That was really a toughie." When an onlooker asks, "What are you going to do, Chuck?" he replies, "What would you do?" The response is candid. "I'd quit." Williams glibly retorts, "Can't do that. Might hurt Father Crosby's feelings. What I really need is a saw." The resultant putt goes "thataway," leading to Hogan's triumphant shot on the 18th green, as the commentator announces, "He did it, ladies and gentlemen. Ben Hogan is the winner of the Bing Crosby Tournament here at Pebble Beach, California." Cam Puget, with whom Bing partnered while playing in his 1950 tourney, appears as himself in this reenactment. Bing's connection to this film is indeed intriguing and his namesake tournament's involvement bears further scrutiny.

In 1953 Bing and Bob Hope would appear with their friend in the inspirational *Faith, Hope and Hogan,* a short subject made in the aftermath of his recovery from a massive car crash. This accident is the dramatic centerpiece of *Follow the Sun.* Dennis O'Keefe would go on to play in the 1964 Crosby, and had cameo appearances in a couple of Bing's late 50's specials.

Post Script: Upon reading my draft report on *Follow the Sun*, Neal Hotelling, resident historian until last April for the Pebble Beach Company and author of *Pebble Beach Golf Links* (Sleeping Bear Press; 1999; and *Pebble Beach: The Official Golf History* (Triumph Books:2009), graciously provided these insights.

I can affirm that they shot at Pebble Beach in October 1950. The weather is predictably much better that time of year than when the Crosby was played (then in January). In fact, the cold (cold being relative, say to Chicago), damp winters at Pebble Beach mostly kept Hogan from competing at the Crosby after the accident. He remarkably returned to Pebble Beach as the defending champion for the 1950 event and finished T-17 (77 at Cyprus Point Club; 74 at Monterey Peninsula Country Club and 72 at Pebble Beach Golf Links).

He did not come again until 1956 when Bing coaxed him back as his partner. Bing himself hadn't played in the event since 1953 as his hosting duties took up his time. As they played on Sunday on a particularly wet and windy day, Bing could see that Ben was not doing well, and when they got to the 13th hole, Bing pointed to his home there and suggested they could walk-off, warm-up and call it a day. Ben insisted on playing it through and finished his last competitive round at Pebble Beach with an 81 (67-CPC; 73-MPCC; 81-PBGL). Bing helped the team score as they finished T-10 (60-63-73). It was only a 54-hole event in the early years.

Ben Hogan with Bing in 1956.

The locker room scene was not filmed at Pebble Beach. It might have been Cypress Point or it was more likely a sound stage. Hogan was on-site to hit the shots from off-camera. The Pebble Beach archive has a nice series of shots taken during the filming. One of my favorites shows a gathering just off the 18th green with Hogan, Ford, Lawson Little, and course pro Peter Hay all seated with all the movie gear set-up near the green. The movie took poet license in the telling. In the actual 1949 event, for the final round Hogan (and amateur partner Johnny Dawson) was paired with Cary Middlecoff (and amateur partner Frank Stranahan). Hogan won by two shots (70-68-70--208) over Jim Ferrier (69-70-71--210) and 3 over Jimmy Demaret (69-70-72--211). Hogan and Dawson (a 0-handicap amateur) finished third in the team competition; in 1948, they had won as a team and Hogan finished third among the pros.

Can't Can't: An Uncanny Might-Have Been

Bonhams in New York held on November 20, 2018 *TCM Presents The Dark Side of Hollywood*, the lion's share of which focused on horror film memorabilia. Several Crosby-related items were available at this auction. Lot # 133, "A Set of 4 Green-Painted Hitchcock Chairs from *White Christmas*," fetched $2500. Choreographer Robert Alton retained them after completion of the film. The catalogue states that *the chairs can be seen in the touching scene where Crosby leads a group of soldiers in a rendition of "We'll Follow the Old Man" to honor General Waverly.*

Lot # 134, "A Bing Crosby White Christmas cigarette lighter given to Choreographer Robert Alton," garnered $1,062. The catalogue elaborates. *The lighter was given to the choreographer as a gift. Alton had his work cut out for him when he staged dance routines for White Christmas in which Crosby, not a dancer by nature, participated. Crosby was a hard worker, however, and whatever he lacked in precision was easily forgiven with his charismatic personality. Though Alton took it easy on Crosby, the complicated dance numbers which he choreographed for dancer Vera-Ellen, and even comedian Danny Kaye, are still considered some of Hollywood's finest.*

Lot # 430, "A Darryl F. Zanuck Archive of Retained Copies of Correspondence," sold for $250. The approximately 200 type-written documents pertain to films in production at Twentieth Century Fox during 1955-56, with each one housed in a 3-ring binder, alphabetized with tabs according film title. One exchange between screenwriter/producer Henry Ephron and Zanuck offers a tantalizing glimpse into a might-have-been Bing project, while underscoring his movie star power in 1956.

To Darryl Zanuck; dated January 31, 1956 Subject: Can-Can

Dear Darryl, I had lunch with Claude Binyon yesterday and we discussed your letter. We think generally that your criticisms, beside keeping us out of the pitfalls of farce, will help to cut the story to its proper length...Binyon will start the screenplay next week.

Casting: to me, the perfect casting for Aristede is Bing Crosby. Lew [casting director Lew Schreiber] *tells me that Bing was approached once by Nunnally* [Johnson] *and turned down. I don't know whether we have sufficiently changed it to attract him again. However, Bing and Binyon are very good friends and Binyon did the screenplay of what was probably Bing's best film, HOLIDAY INN, so it might be worth going after him again.(Bing Crosby and Marilyn Monroe?)*

Putting that aside, I can't honestly say we should go for a French cast or not. With Victor Borge as Axel, I'd strongly recommend considering Gwen Verdon for Claudine...

Further, I generally still feel that we ought to try for beautiful people in this picture, at least very attractive ones. As sensational as (Anna) *Magnani is in ROSE TATTOO, I'm not sure she cleans up, or if you do clean her up - you haven't got Magnani. However, it's such a wonderful, offbeat suggestion that I think we should consider it very seriously...One way to make her attractive would be to cast a handsome leading man opposite her. I think that's the basis of Magnani's great quality. You believe a young man would be in love with her because of her individuality, and I think advantage should be taken of that fact. Jean Pierre Aumont fits that bill, but I've always felt that somewhere along the line he doesn't make it, and he doesn't look strong enough to take Magnani. (Magnani and Bing Crosby?)*

I think generally we should stay away from the Dietrichs and Colberts - except for Magnani. I believe we must think of Pistache as a younger woman. I've been told that Susan Hayward is interested in this part and while she's got the physical beauty for it, I don't think she's got the comedic quality necessary. What we really need is the Dietrich of DESTRY RIDES AGAIN, not the Dietrich of today.

When Can-Can was eventually made in 1959, Frank Sinatra starred as Francois and Bing visited him on the set.

To Henry Ephron (cc Buddy Adler, Lew Schreiber); dated Jan. 31, 1956 Subject Can-Can

Dear Henry,

Bing Crosby read the previous script of Can-Can and did not like it. It was obviously wrong for him although he was originally intrigued by the show and I understand he saw the show several times.

Perhaps he might be intrigued by the new script but one thing we know for certain and that is he will not make a move until he sees a finished script and until he knows all about the possibilities. I see no harm in Claude [Binyon] talking to Bing since they are personal friends. He might frankly "feel out" Bing and this might revive interest.

I warn you, however, that we will never pay what Metro is paying him. [filming of MGM's *High Society* was just underway] *They have terms and conditions that would be impossible for us to meet.*

I see that you are intrigued by Magnani. Of course the combination of Bing Crosby and Magnani would be something just out of this world. It might be just the combination that would appeal to both of them...

If Magnani is not interested and if we change our evaluation of the role then I think we should consider Susan Hayward. She can sing it and she can certainly play a tough, aggressive character. In another way she is just as offbeat as Magnani.

Our main job now is to get the first draft script so that we can at least start talking to these people.

Eventually, Louis Jourdan essayed the role of Aristede, rechristened Philippe, and Shirley MacLaine undertook the role of Pistache, in the 1960 Fox release, boasting a screenplay by Dorothy Kingsley, Charles Lederer and Abe Burrows. Frank Sinatra starred as Francois. Axel was perhaps a re-naming of Paul, the

judge whom Maurice Chevalier portrayed. Ironically, this planned international pairing of Bing and Magnani portends the envisioned teaming of Bing with Simone Signoret in another Fox film, *High Time*, in which Bing actually co-starred with French actress Nicole Maurey. (My gratitude extends to Bonhams consultant Dana Hawkes for facilitating my photographing these precious lots.)

Martin McQuade

On the road with Paul Whiteman

Ace researcher Gary Hamann has turned up details of the Whiteman ensemble concert on May 26, 1929 in Detroit. Whiteman was on his way to Hollywood to film *King of Jazz*. We had always assumed that Bing was simply one of the Rhythm Boys but he was clearly more than that according to the program which was printed in the Detroit papers on the day of the concert.

1. "Concerto in F" by Gershwin. Featuring Roy Bargy, piano.
2. "Nadine" featuring Chester Hazlett, saxophonist.
3. "Tchaikowakiana," featuring special arrangement by Paul Whiteman of the Tchaikovsky melodies
4. "Old Golds," sung by Paul Whiteman **Rhythm Boys.**
5. "Waltz medley" arranged by William Still. (a) "Down by the Old Mill Stream" (b) "Sweet Adeline" (c) In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" (d) After the Ball Is Over."
6. "Show Boat" selection, featuring **Bing Crosby**, assisted by the Rhythm Boys—Jerome Kern. (a) "Ol' Man River," (b) "Only Make Believe," (c) "Can't Help Lovin' That Man," (d) "Why Do I Love You?" (e) "Ol' Man River"
7. (a) "Sunrise to Sunset," Featuring Ray Heatherton—Miller-McLaughlin (b) "Hallelujah." Featuring the **Rhythm Boys** — Vincent Youmans (c) "Mean to Me," featuring **Bing Crosby**—Turk and Alhert
8. "Rhapsody in Blue," Roy Bargy, pianist—George Gershwin

A somewhat enthusiastic report of the concert appeared the next day.

Whiteman Is Heard By 14,000 at Olympia

Paul Whiteman, inimitable king of jazz, with his famous Old Gold band entertained an estimated 14,000 persons in Olympia, Sunday evening with a program which aroused unstinted applause. The concert was a complimentary affair, arranged by The Detroit Free Press in co-operation with the radio station WGHP, and the appearance of the nationally famous band leader with his noble organization drew city-wide attention.

The event was the fourth concert in the transcontinental tour of this outstanding organization, which specializes in symphonic syncopation. Whiteman, incidentally, being headed for the west coast where he is to begin his first motion picture, "King of Jazz," first shots of which are scheduled to be made June 15.

This rotund and popular band leader has brought a new status to popular music, not only in this country but abroad. He has glorified and exalted the insidious syncopation of the music of the day and the lilt, the rhythmic variety, the color and vivacity, which a band under master leadership can display, he amply demonstrated in the concert program given last evening. It was music which set the nerves a tingle, which made the huge audience beat time and sway with the rhythmic beat and glorious color of the music, music in which Whiteman quivered and shook with every syncopation as he led his organization of adept musicians.

Long before the hour set for the opening of the concert, the enormous crowd began pouring into Olympia and the keen attention of the throng and the spontaneous applause demonstrated the immense pleasure derived from the program. Whiteman gave a varied list of numbers ranging from the classical transcriptions in which he has shown himself so adept, to popular selections of the day.

Of special interest to the audience were his renditions of the well-known selection "Nola" and the numbers chosen from "Show Boat", "Old Man River" and "Why Must I Love You." But a selection which set hands clapping was the interpretation given "When Dreams Come True," while the lilt and the punch of the reading accorded "Hallelujah," featuring the Rhythm Boys brought acclaim to the organization. Whiteman has specialized in a performance which emphasis melodious, rhythmic, softened sound, in place of the blaring blatancy of former jazz players and these numbers showed his audience the appeal and lilt of popular music as he presents it…

Saxophones sing with appealing charm as Whiteman emphasizes his music: oboe, piano and voice are called upon for special features, as his picked artists interpret his arrangements. The applause which greeted his waltz medley, featuring "Sweet Adeline" and "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" indicated the pleasure his particular transcription afforded.

The program was brought to a close with a brilliant performance of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." Roy Bargy being presented as soloist.

(*The Detroit Free Press,* May 27, 1929)

It would have been great to have been there and it seems that Bing was already starting to leave the Rhythm Boys behind as a greater emphasis on him as a solo performer was becoming apparent.

Forgotten verses

Most of you will be familiar with the verse to "White Christmas" which Bing decided not to sing.

The sun is shining, the grass is green
The orange and palm trees sway
I've never seen such a day
In Beverly Hills, L.A.
But it's December the twenty-fourth
And I am longing to be up north

Many more of Bing's successful recordings originally had verses which were not used. As the temporary custodian of the late Gwen Harvey's sheet music collection last year, I looked through the songs with verses and there are quite a few surprises. So, first of all, let's have a quiz.

1. Which hit song of Bing's had this verse?

Are you list'ning?
Are you bored?
Have I struck that certain chord?
Does your little heart react
Why hide the fact?
Keep me guessing but you'll find I possess a one track mind.
Love is all I talk about
But you'll never tune me out!

2. Here's an easier one. Name the title.

Sweetheart of mine, I've sent you a Valentine,
Sweetheart of mine,
It's more than a Valentine.

3. 3. This one is hard. Any ideas?

Stand there just a moment, darling, let me catch my breath

I've never seen a picture quite so lovely

How did you ever learn to look so lovely?

The answers are given at the end of this article and if you get them all right, you will have almost reached Michael Feinstein level.

Generally, I think most of the verses were unnecessary but one which could have been used to help the subject matter of the song was that for "Empty Saddles". This is how it goes.

There's something strange in the old corral
There's a breeze, tho' the wind has died,
Tho' I'm alone in the old corral
Seems there is someone at my side.
There is no smoke, still the fires burn
There's no song, still I hear guitars,
There is no dust, still the ghosts return softly to vanish thro' the bars.

I was surprised to find that there was a verse to "I'm an Old Cowhand" and again it helps to give some background to the chorus although it was a good job it was left out of the recording.

Step aside you ornery Tenderfeet
Let a big bad buckeroo pass
I'm the toughest hombre you'll ever meet
Though I may be the last
Yes sir-ree we're a vanishing race
No sir-ree can't last long
Step aside you ornery tenderfeet while I sing my song

One verse you may recall though was to "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive" as Bing and Bette Midler sang it on the Pasadena show in 1977 although it was not used on the commercial recording with The Andrews sisters.

Gather 'round me ev'ry body,
Gather 'round me while I preach some,
Feel a sermon comin' on me
The topic will be sin and that's what I'm agin,
If you wanna hear my story
Then settle back and just sit tight
While I start reviewin' the attitude of doin' right.

Another which would have helped clarify the title for us was that for "Zing a Little Zong!

Let's imagine we're in Holland and we're underneath the moon,
Let's walk a little, talk a little, kiss a little, cling a little, sigh a little, sing a little tune...

However, Jack Kapp's well-known statement "Where's the melody" showed sound judgement and omitting the verses usually helped the recordings. Imagine if the verse to "My Melancholy Baby" had been used!

Come, sweetheart mine, don't sit and pine
Tell me of the cares that make you feel so blue
What have I done?
Answer me, hon',
Have I ever said an unkind word to you?
My love is true,
And just for you
I'd do almost anything at any time
Dear, when you sigh

Or when you cry
Something seems to grip this very heart of mine
Birds in the trees,
Sweet melodies
They will take you to a land of peaceful dreams
Clouds will roll by

Kapp could perhaps have used the verse to "I'll Be Home for Christmas" though.

I'm dreaming tonight of a place I love,
Even more than I usually do
And although I know it's a long road back,
I promise you...

More verses next time

Malcolm Macfarlane

(Answers to the quiz. 1. Please 2. Be Careful, It's My Heart 3. Moonlight Becomes You)

Metronome

Metronome Magazine (or *Metronome*) was a music magazine published from 1881 until 1961. The magazine in its early years catered for musicians in marching and then dance bands, but from the swing era, *Metronome* focused primarily on the genre of Jazz music appealing to fans. The Australian Bing Crosby Society newsletter for August included the results of various polls undertaken by Metronome over the years and the poll for singers (not with a band) was of particular interest to us.

1937	Bing Crosby	-----	-----
1938	Bing Crosby	Leo Watson	Buddy Clark
1939	Bing Crosby	Joe Turner	Leo Watson
1940	Bing Crosby	Joe Turner	-----
1941	Bing Crosby	Joe Turner	-----
1942	Bing Crosby	Joe Turner	-----
1943	Frank Sinatra	Bing Crosby	Perry Como
1944	Bing Crosby	Frank Sinatra	Dick Haymes
1945	Bing Crosby	Frank Sinatra	Dick Haymes
1946	Frank Sinatra	Bing Crosby	Perry Como

Clearly Bing dominated the poll but how many of you remember Joe Turner and Leo Watson?

Wikipedia states that **"Big Joe" Turner Jr.** (May 18, 1911 – November 24, 1985) was an American blues shouter from Kansas City, Missouri. According to songwriter Doc Pomus, "Rock and roll would have never happened without him." His greatest fame was due to his rock-and-roll recordings in the 1950s, particularly "Shake, Rattle and Roll",

Leo Watson (February 27, 1898 – May 2, 1950), again according to Wikipedia, was an American jazz vocalese singer, drummer, trombonist and tiple player born in Kansas City, Missouri, perhaps best known as a band member of The Spirits of Rhythm, which included guitarist Teddy Bunn. Watson also worked briefly with a variety of big bands, including those of Gene Krupa, Artie Shaw and Jimmy Mundy.

Neither of them had any hit records in the 1930s or 40s! Makes you wonder about the validity of polls, doesn't it?

ONE SWEET LETTER FROM YOU

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Bob Phillips, by email from Virginia, USA.

I have received my long awaited Christmas present for which in part Gary Giddins is responsible. The book which ends a few years before I joined Bing Crosby Enterprises is a well-researched and written biography of a man who I greatly respected. It has filled in many of the gaps in his life for me, but has not dimmed my great memories of him. My only regret is that my young years did not impress on me the events through which I lived.

The book also has others in it I knew, like Preston Sturges and his Players Restaurant where I worked when I first came to Hollywood. There are others like Judy Garland, Ginny Simms, Rosemary Clooney, not to mention Bing's brothers and sons. In addition the book provides an excellent history of the movies, records and radio of the old Hollywood that I knew. However, he does not cover the radio in the detail that he gives to the movies. There are stories there to be told. If he does the third book, I hope radio gets more coverage.

Thank you for the publishing my article in BING. Gary notes in his book that Bing walked across the street from the Paramount Gate to record at Decca. During the period of the book he did, but it was the old gate and the street was Valentino Place (or Marathon Street) and not Melrose.

Bob Grace, by email from Houston, Texas, USA

If you haven't already heard, there was a nice cover story on Michael Buble in last Sunday's *Parade* magazine (Dec. 30). There are a couple of nice mentions of Bing as being an influence on his career in the article. Talking about growing up in Canada, the story says:

. . . For Christmas, they'd put up the lights early and play Bing Crosby's *Merry Christmas* album for a month and a half. He's especially grateful for that -- Crosby

playing on regular rotation is one reason "why my soul is so, so connected to the Great American Songbook," he says. The holidays literally led him to the successful career he has today.

Later in the article, he mentions that he is now playing Bing's recordings at Christmas for his children.

. . . Like his mother did for him, this year he took his kids to see houses with lights and Santa at the mall. And he put on Bing Crosby and Darlene Love -- but "no, I don't get played at Christmas," he says. "I hear it enough doing the Christmas shopping!"

Nice to see Bing given credit as an influence on a young singer's career -- and his wish to pass on that appreciation to this children.

Mike Mansley, by email from Porthcawl, Wales, UK

I have just finished reading another excellent "BING" and I have also received as a Christmas present "Swinging on a Star". With its 736 pages it's going to take some time to read and it's not surprising that it's 18 years since Gary Giddins copyrighted "A Pocketful of Years" and found the time to produce this follow-up. I only hope at 86 now I live long enough to read the 736 pages in what appears to be 10 point print!

With the winter magazine there was a request for the payment of my subscription which I have sent and also a request for subscribers' views on an increase in the subscription rate or, as alternative, limiting the publication to two per year.

I would have no objection to an increase: I already subscribe £30 and I consider the magazine to be worth every penny. I could also see a reason for two issues per year. The amount of information about Bing Crosby that is not already known and recorded must be limited and with the publication of this latest epic it must be becoming very difficult to find new material to fill three issues. I know that most of the content comes from the U.S. and it is there, presumably, that the practicality of maintaining the three issues every year will be decided.

The other consideration is, of course, the inevitable decline in membership. I've been a Bing "fan" since 1944 but as I mentioned above at 86 my membership of the ICC can't be considered to be long term and I suspect that the membership list could include several similar vintage sailors in the same dinghy.

If the editorial team is comfortable with finding sufficient new information about Bing to fill three issues then this would be ideal. Increasing the contribution to £30 might be too much for some to manage and therefore a smaller increase to, say, £25 might be less of a deterrent to continuing as a member and it might then, after a further period of time, be possible to further increase the subscription. It is a very difficult decision to make and a great deal depends upon how serious the present financial situation is and the amount of new material to sustain the quality of the magazine is available. I do hope that a solution is found to enable the magazine to continue.

(Editor: For what it's worth, I don't see a problem in finding enough content for three issues thanks mainly to the many excellent contributions I receive.)

Lars Schinnerling, by email from Langen, Germany

Recently, I came across some very rare Brunswick flyers from Germany from the 1930s. Brunswick was the label under which Decca marketed its records in Germany at the time. I was surprised to see how many US and British recordings were issued in Germany at the time. The 1939 German Brunswick record catalogue lists a total of 34 different songs by Bing alone. I learned, however, that those records were pressed in small numbers only, a typical way how dictatorships work. To the outside world, it could be shown how open Nazi Germany was to release all this foreign music but in reality, the quantities were so limited that the records were often sold under the counter only. Things got more restricted after the war started and I'm sure, later these rec

	"DOUBLE OR NOTHING" (Burke-Johnston)	
A 81314	**The Moon Got In My Eyes** **Smarty** (You know it all)	**Bing Crosby**
A 81315	**It's The Natural Thing To Do** **All You Want To Do Is Dance**	**Bing Crosby**
A 81345	**It's The Natural Thing To Do,** Fox-trot **The Moon Got In My Eyes,** Fox-trot	Horace Heidt & Orch. mit engl. Refraingesang
A 81330	**All You Want To Do Is Dance,** Fox-trot **My Cabin Of Dreams,** Fox-trot	Gus Arnheim & Orch. mit engl. Refraingesang
A 81376	**All You Want To Do Is Dance** **It's The Natural Thing To Do**	Jimmy Dorsey & Orch. mit engl. Refraingesang
A 81375	**The Moon Got In My Eyes,** Fox-trot **After You,** Fox-trot	Jimmy Dorsey & Orch. mit engl. Refraingesang
A 81301	**Smarty** (You know it all) **Listen, My Children And You Shall Hear**	Count Basie & Orch.

I thought that you may use these flyers in a future BING magazine to show how popular Bing must have been even in Germany at the time.

David Currington, by email from Turramurra, New South Wales, Australia.

I've just finished reading SWINGING ON A STAR and it finished leaving me yearning even more for volume three. Let's hope that Gary does come good on that sooner than later. I notice that he gave you great credit in his reference section for his heavy use of your DAY BY DAY. Good on you.

The book was a revelation as to just how troubled the marriage with Dixie was and how extensively he entertained during the war.

Gary's reference to a number of broadcasts in which Bing appeared had me trawling the net without success, trying to turn up a "new" song or two. I did turn up a piano roll version of Bing's theme song, an extract of which I've sent via my gmail address because of size restrictions here.

It's fascinating to find that there is a second verse of "Where the Blue of the Night" which (in case you have trouble reading the travelling piano roll) is as follows -

MEMORIES COME BACK TO ME
OF A SUNSET BEHIND A HILL
EACH NEW BORN DAY
TAKES ME AWAY
TO THAT PLACE THAT I LONG FOR STILL

We've only heard Bing sing the opening verse on his 1931 studio recording and so that is rare. But this second verse is unknown. I've seen the sheet music in years gone by but I don't recall the inclusion of this verse.

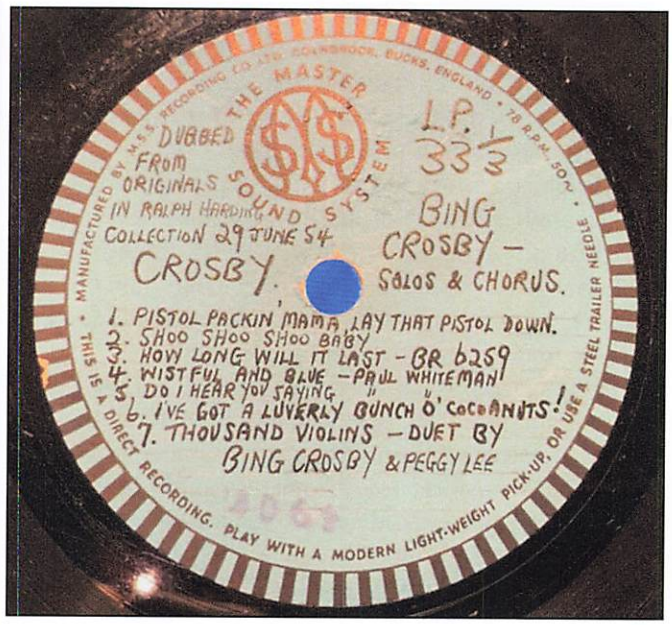
Another bit of useless trivia, but a fascination to a dyed-in-the-wood collector.

CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland has a walk down memory lane and discovers some interesting facts.

Have you ever heard the sound made by a dropping penny? Loud, isn't it? Last November, I was fulfilling a commitment that I had made to my late friend, John Joyce, to help his family decide what to do with his collection. Happily, it was anything but the sombre occasion that it might have been. John's family shared the view that I have long held which is that a collection is only of any value to the collector who assembled it in the first place. Not necessarily every item, but certainly lots, hold a memory of the circumstances in which they were acquired. A chance find in a second-hand shop perhaps, or maybe a long search, involving hours and hours poring over photostat copies of auction lists. Every face tells a story and so, in my experience, does every record. But once the collector is gone, what's left? To me, it's no more than an aggregation of individual items, awaiting dispersal and perhaps a new role filling a gap in another collection and creating a new memory. But trying to keep a collection "together", to me, serves no purpose once its collector has gone.

John's wife, Josee, brother Franc, daughter Jenny and I spent a pleasant day, sharing memories of what various items had meant to John, and as we swapped stories and anecdotes, we all came away with some additional nugget about John that we had not known before. The musical love of John's life was his collection of reel to reel tapes, and whilst I brought a few home with me for further inspection and audit, most of them had simply been overtaken by the passage of time, their contents now readily available on CD or even via Internet download. There were some records, lots in fact, but John had parted company with his collection of 78s many years ago, having transferred the rarer ones to reel tape, and his remaining LPs and CDs offered nothing more in terms of value or interest than the 50 pence box in a charity shop.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CROSBY.
L.P. 33 1/3
BING CROSBY - SOLOS & CHORUS.
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2. SHOO SHOO SHOO BABY
3. HOW LONG WILL IT LAST - BR 6259
4. WISTFUL AND BLUE - PAUL WHITEMAN
5. DO I HEAR YOU SAYING "
6. I'VE GOT A LUVERLY BUNCH O' COCOANUTS!
7. THOUSAND VIOLINS - DUET BY BING CROSBY & PEGGY LEE
MANUFACTURED BY M.S.S. RECORDING CO. LTD. BOREHAMWOOD, BUCKS, ENGLAND
78 R.P.M.
THIS IS A DIRECT RECORDING. PLAY WITH A MODERN LIGHT-WEIGHT PICK-UP, OR USE A STEEL TRAILER NEEDLE

Then came the moment that made the day. From the back of a musty cupboard, we discovered a cardboard box, full of 10" discs. Some were unlabelled, whilst a couple turned out to be private recordings made by John's brother, Franc and which he had long thought to be lost. My attention was drawn however to one particular disc. The label told me that it was a product of MSS (The Master Sound System), with seven Crosby titles, "dubbed from originals in the Ralph Harding Collection" and created on 29 June 1954. The titles - handwritten on the label by Ralph, I now know - are all now familiar to us but what first caught my eye was the date of the disc, a

mere 10 weeks after the date of my own birth. What I then realised was that I was looking into a world that until then, I did not know existed. There is with any generation, the ever-present danger of assuming that our first awareness of something generally marks its inception (as Philip Larkin expertly articulated with his comment that sexual intercourse began in 1963 with the banning of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"). Until I saw the MSS disc, it had never occurred to me that, before reel to reel tape recorders, there was a way for collectors to share rare recordings. How blinkered can you get?

The questions then began to unfold rapidly in my mind. How had Ralph - who was one of the best known Crosby collectors of his time (and whose home had the name of this column - *Crosbyana)* managed to get his originals onto an acetate disc? And just how common a practice was this?

My first port of call was of course, the Internet. I soon had an advertisement in front of me from MSS, offering their recording services. A 10" single sided disc in 1950 would have cost 3 shillings and eight pence, round about the same price as a commercial 78 at that time.

I moved on quickly to discover that there was a whole host of private recording companies offering similar services, although MSS were one of the bigger and better known, with both the BBC and the British Government amongst their clientele. The company had been formed by Cyril Watts in the 1930s as Marguerite Sounds Studios (named for Watts' wife). Watts was one of the pioneers of the lacquer (acetate) disc in Britain, after seeing the huge effort and time wasted by the major record companies in setting up and using the thick wax masters in recording sessions. Renamed MSS (no need to change the logo), they went onto to develop and sell disc recording machines, and even after the arrival of reel tape, they were still extolling the virtues of tape to disc transfers, as a more permanent and non-erasable means of preserving sound.

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These cellulose lacquer aluminium discs are unequalled for their high performance — a frequency range extending to well above 10 Kc/s is easily recorded and reproduced. They consistently permit efficient cutting over a range of ambient temperatures of from 0°C. to 60°C. Used by leading broadcasting stations, film studios, private and commercial recording studios. Can be stored indefinitely either blank or recorded.
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So how did Ralph get his originals onto the disc? MSS had several studios in London and in my head, I imagined Ralph turning up with his priceless originals in a briefcase and waiting patiently (although from my memory of him, Ralph didn't do patient) whilst they were copied. But someone who was around at that time, and remembers it well, reckons not. Stan White, who has been part of every British Crosby club for almost 70 years, was quick to respond to my question. "Ralph's recordings on that MSS disc were quite rare at the time" said Stan. "I would say that they were dubbed onto tape and sent to MSS for copying." It's certainly possible in terms of the chronology. Stan said that the first tape recorder he ever heard had been purchased by a friend in 1950 and that by the middle of that decade, they were pretty common.

Stan also brought me full circle in answering my question of just how common this disc-to-disc, or disc-to-tape-to-disc, copying had been. He referred me to a letter from another great British Crosby man, Colin Pugh, "back when you edited BING", said Stan. Sure enough, BING 101 in August 1992, has a letter from Colin. As part of a debate about the origins of Bing's version of "Why Don't You Fall in Love with Me", Colin wrote that he had been the source of the acetate copies that were circulating after the war. "At that time," wrote Colin, "I had a disc cutting machine and was cutting on a regular basis for various collectors". Colin was one of the doyens of Crosby collecting, and ran a music shop of his own, so more likely than most perhaps to get into "cutting". Another name that Stan tossed out was Deroy Records of Carnforth, and later Ormskirk, in Lancashire, a private recording and disc copying business, founded and run by two brothers, Derek (De) and Roy (Roy) Marsh. Derek, said Stan, was the source of much of the material that found its way to Bob Roberts, another collector I remember fondly ("Bob's Stores", Chatham, Kent, was his address), and which in time, was passed onto a new generation of collectors like me. And if you want a note in the margin, Deroy Records was where a bunch of young Liverpudlians called The Quarrymen cut their first record in the late 1950s. It was the genesis of The Beatles.

So there you have it, as our man once said, or if you are a *Star Trek* fan, 'life Jim, but not as we know it'. With three clicks of a mouse, I can access any one of 7,373 Crosby songs on my computer and play it instantly. How lucky we are. Or are we? It's just possible that, way back then, it was a little bit more fun.

Ken Crossland ken54@blueyonder.co.uk

(Editor: Ken's friend, John Joyce, was a keen golfer and very proud of a letter he had received from Bing in 1977 and this is reproduced on our back inside cover).

Bing: An American Institution

Many of you will know about Alistair Cooke's tribute to Bing after his death which was broadcast as part of his "Letter from America" BBC radio series. In our last edition, Ken Crossland referred to this in his *Crosbyana* article. However, Mr. Cooke had broadcast an earlier tribute to Bing in 1947 which was reproduced in the BBC magazine *The Listener* of July 17, 1947. It makes interesting reading.

This is a talk about hero-worship, and a living hero. The traditional American hero is the pioneer. Now it is certainly no epigram to say that the pioneer days in America are over. It is not merely that the whole continent has been opened up. No country has done a more thorough job of bringing city comforts to its prairies and mountains. No other country has assumed that a cement highway is the normal thing to travel on across its most arid deserts and through its toughest mountains. In no country is it easier to rough it in the landscape of Persia or Africa or Switzerland.

Maybe it is because the pioneer died such a swift death that Americans are so sentimental about him, why Hollywood will not make movies about the modern West but only about the old Spanish days, about the railroad massacres, and the heyday of the Texas Rangers. If it is true that people cling most lovingly to something they are about to lose, you will understand why Americans, whose country was staked out and hewn out by the pioneer, cannot bear to lose him. So what they do is to stretch the definition of the pioneer, and now they apply the word to men who are shrewd or lucky enough to do something or invent something nobody else had thought of, and bold enough to turn it into a monopoly product.

But the typical American hero of the last quarter-century has been not the inventor but the production man: the giants of the assembly line—Ford with automobiles, Glenn Martin with airplanes, Henry Kaiser with ships. The American trick has been to meet the challenge of producing quantities precisely of those goods that are thought of as painfully made quality goods. Ford's startling success was based on producing ten times as many motor-cars as his competitors, at a fifth of the price they could afford to sell. He turned a luxury into a utensil. Whatever you may think about the motives of such men, what has made them romantic to Americans is not so much the massive lay-out of their factories, or their present capital investment, but the well-remembered fact that at a decisive moment in their struggling career they thumbed their nose at the experts, they were mad when everybody else was sane. And their madness paid off as sanity never does.

Henry Kaiser was, like everybody else at one time of the war, worried over the ability of the Nazi submarines to knock off freighters like skittles. He decided heavy cargo 'planes were the answer, He did not begin by calling in experts to design a cargo 'plane. He called his own most sceptical designers, and borrowed others from Glenn Martin, and asked then to show him, in most careful detail, the impossibility of freight 'planes. They drew up intricate blueprints to show him he was crazy. Then he smiled. 'Now we know all the ways it can't be done. The question now is, how do we do it?'

It is this quality which Americans admire most in their tycoons, and in their superlatively successful men. It is not the admiration of having money as such. There is outside of America a profound misunderstanding of the popular American view of money. It is, in one important way, the very opposite of the European view. Whereas for so long in Europe it was admirable to be born into money whose origins were lost in the kindly mists of time, and vulgar to make a lot of money yourself; so in America there was, and is, a popular feeling that inherited wealth makes a man a sissy or a fuddy-duddy, whereas to make a million yourself proves you are a very smart cookie.

Yet, however much Americans may envy or admire their self-made millionaires, they do not often envy them their individual character or think of them as romantic figures. Too often a millionaire is old and unbending before he is a public man, and by that time he gets to think of himself as a public character and tends to think big, self-conscious public thoughts.

There is, however, one millionaire in America, one tycoon, who is more envied than most, and more loved than any, because his character has made a monkey out of all the copybook maxims, and of all the rich men who attribute their success to hard work, perseverance, taking pains, and solid character. This man has been called a 'minor business octopus'. He is a big cattle-rancher (10,000 acres); he breeds and sells racehorses. He was an airplane manufacturer during the war. He has run a gold mine. He has managed everything from a publishing house to a baseball team (which in the United States is a big business). He earns about a million dollars a year. Yet, when a division of American soldiers were trapped on Bataan, on Christmas Eve, 1942, they radioed to the War Department that the man they wanted to hear from most was this same tycoon, who, when they were near death, they believed could recall all that was most distant and familiar and carefree. They wanted to hear from the President of a corporation that owns his own personality, the President of Bing Crosby, Incorporated.

Bing and John Scott Trotter prepare for the broadcast to Bataan.

If this is indeed the Century of the Common Man, I think it is a pretty good working maxim that the most successful man will be one that millions of ordinary people can see themselves in. My own contender for the nomination is not, oddly enough, Henry Agard Wallace, but Harry Lillis Crosby, Jr., who, as a boy, was always reading a forgotten hero of the comic strips, called The Bingville Bugle, and got tagged with the nickname—Bingo. What is odd about him as a millionaire—in fact it's fair to say that what has made him a millionaire—is his ability to look like anybody who isn't going very far and doesn't care. It is impressive of course to learn that Edison or Marconi or Mr. Gladstone stayed up by guttering candles and awoke each day, with two red eyes, and rushed off at dawn to be first in the public library. But it is more endearing to read about a boy who, being dragged up before his teacher at the Catholic school he attended, was warned 'Young man, either your basketball or your chemistry must improve' and who replied, stifling a polite yawn, 'Well, Father, there's no use both of us worrying'.

Bing was one of seven children of a half-Irish family that grew up in Spokane, Washington. He was abominably easy-going, he thought all day about jazz, he plotted how to get into a golf course without being spotted, he swam in forbidden rivers, he planned successful raids on the kitchens of anybody in town holding a fancy party; and he admits to having been a glib liar, an accomplished stealer. He was a favourite victim of the truant officer. He ran away from home to become a baseball player, and failed. He made passes at helping a farmer in the summer. At the end of a week the farmer was disgusted, and Bing agreed with his judgment. 'Too true', said Bing, 'Mother Earth just didn't take to me'. But Mother Crosby did, and in a half-apologetic way he made up to himself for his general sin by being attentive and affectionate to his mother; Thirty years later he initiated her into the fascination of playing the horses. Now, in Hollywood, she is an addict. But she is also a fervent teetotaller. Not so her sons. So that when she raised a storm about the bottle, Bing had the final answer. Rolling his intense blue eyes upwards—his eyes are, by the way, the only intense thing about him—he said, 'Ma, we drink. You bet on horses. It's all the same in the eyes of the Lord'.

His professional story is old stuff but I should like to track it down to the point where he stopped being just another crooner and became a national institution, whom generals and professors and statesmen scramble to nod to. Bing as a hot jazz singer was nationally unknown. In 1928 and 1929, when he was singing those easy, rhythmic phrases in front of Bix Beiderbecke's golden cornet on Paul Whiteman records, Bing was Bing only to his intimates and to an excited minority of Cambridge undergraduates. Bing as a crooner in the early 'thirties was undoubtedly an idol to young college people, but he was still severely subordinating himself to the rather limited, moonstruck conventions of crooning.

It was not until the middle 'thirties that he hit his stride, or perhaps we should say his shamble. He was starred in a weekly radio programme in which he not only sang, in his old, effortless, rhythmic way, but he conducted interviews with the great and the near-great, seeming to be very humble in their presence but managing to sneak across to a nation-wide audience the unspoken idea that the guest bigshot was a terrific bore. It was not until a few years later when they paired him with the frantic Bob Hope that film critics began to wonder how he managed to convey volumes of friendly disdain in a 'tut-tut ' almost out of the camera's range. We all know him now as about the best light comedian alive.

But his essential gift has never been better put than in a surprising letter a friend of mine, a learned professor of medicine, wrote to me from Baltimore in 1936: 'On the radio, Crosby is just about as good as anything there is. In a medium where everybody strains to be funny or distinguished or charming, he is just about the most relaxed guy alive'. That, in an intense and fearful age, is what he is paid for. In song, it means—as Dinah Shore put it—'he sings the way everybody thinks they sing in the shower'. To this Bing replies, 'Come, come, Sister Di, I'm just another baritone with a gravel voice'.

With Everett Crosby in 1945.

But how about, you may say, the big business, the ranching, the Crosby real estate building, the athletic stadium he plans to build in Los Angeles, the biggest in the world? This side of him is the achievement of his family, a highly profitable exploitation of his natural likes. He was lazy, undependable, and always failing to turn up for his act, when he decided he needed a wife to sober him. He got a wife and she, to say nothing of four boys, sobered him. He liked cattle and horses, but he has

a trusting way with a promise and a casual way with dollars. He thought maybe his brother Larry had better handle the money and arrange the deals. Larry did. He is what has been called a 'secret reader', but reading contracts is heavy stuff to him. He figured his brother Everett ought to look them over. So did his brother, and today Everett Crosby is his keen, restless manager.

Figures bore him totally. So his father, a book-keeper for forty years, keeps the books. This team keeps the amiable, coltish Bing from breaking the reins, but when the business day is over, and he is out of the saddle, he reverts to type. He knocks off an easy 74 at golf, and then he collects the youngest Crosbys and tells them the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. This is no drastic sign of reform, for I should mention that the way Crosby tells it, Little Red Riding Hood is a jockey, the wolf is a crooked starter, and Grandmother is the racing commissioner.

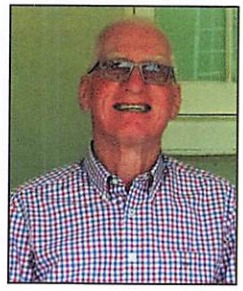
Nobody can foresee his future, but he will go to his grave with an allergy to human pomp. And when he fetches up outside the gates of Heaven, in an orange sweater, green socks, and an old pipe, and sees the approaching form of St. Peter, he will doubtless try a mashie shot with the pencil he keeps behind his ear and drawl, "Hiya, Pete, boy-what's noo? '

Alistair Cooke

(Editor: Letter from America was a weekly 15-minute radio series broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and its predecessor, the Home Service, and to the world through the BBC World Service. Throughout its history it was presented by Alistair Cooke, who would speak of a topical issue in the USA, tying together different strands of observation and anecdote and often ending on a humorous or poignant note. The series ran from 24 March 1946 to 20 February 2004, making it the longest-running speech radio programme hosted by one individual in history. The series lasted for 2,869 broadcasts over nearly 58 years and gathered an enormous audience, being broadcast not only in Britain and in many other Commonwealth countries, but throughout the world by the BBC World Service.

This article was found in the scrapbook of the late Professor John Norris Wood which has been passed on to us by his daughter. I had the great pleasure of meeting John many years ago and he told me about his memorable meeting with Bing in Paris in 1952 when he was a student. He and his friend had approached Bing and said that they were reporters. Bing smiled and indicated that he knew that were not but when he realised that they were students he took them with him for a memorable day as he journeyed around the city in a taxi.)

A Note from Australia



Graham Pascoe joins us again to offer some comments on our last issue.

I've just begun to read my copy of the new Gary Giddins biography of our man so perhaps it's appropriate to note the Australian wartime connections of some matters reported in the winter issue of BING magazine. They concern Australians' reactions to some of Bing's recordings.

'Pistol Packin' Mama' recorded by Bing and the Andrews Sisters in September 1943 was the subject of consideration under the heading of '75 YEARS AGO', noting that the *Hollywood Citizen News* of October 1943 predicted it would be a hit. Their previous two releases, 'Yodellin' Jive' and 'Ciribiribin', had sold well here.

As in the USA, 'Pistol Packin' Mama' was coupled with 'Vict'ry Polka' and was a double-sided hit record but not until 1944. (Its release one year after the recording date was not unusual at the time.) It was Bing's best-selling record in 1944. Both songs were in the top twenty-five of the year, the top place being 'You'll Never Know' by Vera Lynn and by Joe Loss.

As for Bing's October 1st 1943 recordings of 'Poinciana' and 'I'll Be Home for Christmas', Australians could not buy them until 1945 when they were pressed on different discs. Remarkably, they sold identical numbers (3817) in that year. 'Poinciana' with 'One Sweet Letter from You'. 'Poinciana' was in the charts for three months and reached number five position. 'I'll Be Home for Christmas' was backed by 'September Song' and released in May (yes, May) and

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the former was also in the charts for three months, but not at Christmas time, and 'September Song' for two months. Not surprisingly, the disc with 'I'll Be Home for Christmas' outlasted 'Poinciana' and sold almost twice as many copies.

The cover of the sheet music for 'Day Dreaming' with Jason Liddiard's report on the meetings at Warrington caught my attention. In Australia that pleasant Jerome Kern song was pressed with Bing's duet with Muriel Lane on 'The Whistler's Mother-In-Law' as Bing's first release of 1943, some eighteen months after 'Day Dreaming' was recorded. A dubbed master was used for the pressing of 'The Whistler's Mother-in-Law' and it was a hit. Those who attended the Warrington meeting on 6th October enjoyed Bing's 1931 recording of 'A Faded Summer Love'. Australians could not buy it until 1956 when a long-playing Brunswick disc titled *Bing in the Thirties* became available, which included six of the 1931 masters which had not been pressed here as singles. The reason: Brunswick (Australia) had gone out of business, a victim of the depression.

David Lobosco's special memories of one of our editor's favourite Crosby films (as we learned from the last issue of *BING)* is associated with better news for Bing's Australian fans than the failure of Brunswick (Australia). By early 1937 they had been watching his movies and buying his Decca records and, from 1934, belated releases of some of his Brunswick recordings (on the Columbia label).

In 1936 *The Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) included a Women's Supplement each Tuesday and in October readers were advised that Bing was to produce his own (un-named) film '... paying half the cost and the film studio pays the other half ...' Melbourne's evening newspaper *The Herald* had run the story almost verbatim the previous month. *Pennies from Heaven* opened at Sydney's Plaza Theatre on 5 February 1937 and went to Melbourne's De Luxe about one month later. It lasted three weeks at the Plaza which was one week more than his last three films ran at the Prince Edward Theatre although the Plaza seated three hundred more patrons.

David notes that the US critics were not particularly kind to the film. It had been advertised in the *SMH* as 'Happiest of all Bing's happy hits! With five smash song numbers, sung by Bing, and played by Louis Armstrong and his Famous Swing Band'. (It was surely not coincidental that the wording of the ad. was similar to the lobby poster reproduced on page 27 of *BING.*) This newspaper's review was glowing: '... delightfully entertaining ... Bing Crosby emerges from it a more acceptable contribution to the screen than hitherto ... he proves himself an artist ... acting with ease...'

Before the film opened in Melbourne *The Herald* gave it some free publicity in February noting that it was Columbia's new Bing Crosby musical in its 'About Plays, Films and Studios' column and later printed a photo of Bing captioned 'A glimpse of Bing Crosby while crooning in "Pennies from Heaven". This film is billed for Hoyts De Luxe tomorrow.' The review in *The Herald* three days after it began its three-week run included 'Bing Crosby's newest film ... is an entertaining trifle ... His songs will please his admirers, and his role as a modern troubadour is more suited to his personality than some he has played.'

What of those 'five smash songs'? The reviewer in the magazine *Australian Music Maker and Dance Band News* in April 1937 enthused about 'Pennies from Heaven' and 'Let's Call a Heart a Heart', describing them as 'Phenomenal ... recommended without reservation'. In terms of sales, the record was an immediate success, as was the other Decca with 'So Do I' and 'One, Two, Button Your Shoe', but neither sold well afterwards although they remained in the catalogue until 1948. A twelve-inch Decca with the August recordings of 'Pennies from Heaven' and the medley was more expensive (at six compared with four shillings) and far less popular despite its description in a Decca record supplement as 'an ideal souvenir of the picture'. A comparison is in order: the afore-mentioned reviewer had also given a glowing opinion of Hildegarde's Columbia disc with 'Pennies from Heaven' but it had been deleted from the catalogue before the end of the 1930s.

From 1956, when television transmissions commenced until the end of the 1970s, a new generation of Australians was introduced to Bing's movies but not to *Pennies from Heaven.* During that period Bing's movies had been televised some 331 times but *Pennies from Heaven* was one of only five in which Bing had a significant role not to be shown on the small screen.

David's family memories of the film suggest he had a soft spot for Bing's co-star Madge Evans. I wondered whether she was well-known to Australians in 1937. Some Pascoe family research suggests that she was. In July 1916, the author's fifteen-year-old mother went to the cinema and saw Madge Evans as a child star in *The Seven Sisters*. Another member of the cast was Georges Revenant who later played a hotel manager in *Road to Zanzibar*.

In 1937 readers of the *SMH* learned not only that *Pennies from Heaven* was a delightful film but also that 'Bing Crosby continues his phenomenal success as an owner of racehorses', once again in the newspaper's Women's Supplement. Next month the news was that he 'has given 10,000 scarves to women attending the races at Del Mar. The scarves bear autographs of the officers of the club: Fred Astaire, Randolph Scott, Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, Charles Butterworth, and George Raft.' Peter Monaco's article quoted in *BING* states that Bing's 1941 recording of 'Where the Surf Meets the Turf' was a big success. That Decca single was not released in Australia.

Horse racing has always had a big following in Australia so it's not surprising that a success by one of Bing Crosby's horses in Sydney in November 1941 was newsworthy. An evening newspaper *The Sun* reported 'BING CROSBY'S HORSE WINS. MISS HUA ROMPS HOME AND EQUALS RECORD ... The colors [sic] were conspicuous for they are unique in Australia. The yellow cap, with blue tassel, has "Bing" embroidered on the back. The pale blue jacket, with yellow and red hooped sleeves, has ribbon epaulets [sic] and a yellow and blue bow tie.' The next day the paper announced '"Bing" Will Go Crosby's Frills' because the regulations of the Australian Jockey Club allowed only plain colours without any embellishments and would have to be missing when the horse next ran in Sydney.

The last issue of *BING* included illuminating information about some of Bing's television appearances. Australians first saw him in their living rooms in June 1959 when he was in an episode of *The Phil Silvers Show.* From 1960 television stations offered his movies and some specials in which he appeared as either host or guest.

Ron McBride's contribution on *The Edsel Show* might lead one to wonder if Australians were able to watch Bing's part in the launch of that ill-fated motor vehicle. They had been buying Ford vehicles, many locally made, for decades. In August 1961 the TV Guide in the *SMH* referred to a show to be telecast the following Saturday evening under the heading 'High Society' noting, among other things, that 'A special feature of the show is the Crosby-Armstrong version of "Now You Has Jazz"'. Photos of Bing, Frank Sinatra and Rosemary Clooney accompanied the article. Eight days after it was shown it was reviewed in *The Sun-Herald:* 'I have to hand it to Bing Crosby ... All [who appeared] were excellent ... [Bing] is still going as strongly as ever'. It was promoted as *The Bing Crosby Show* and readers were not told that it dated from 1957 as *The Edsel Show.* (Coincidentally, this writer happened to be in the USA in 1956 and 1957 and still has a plastic model of the Edsel which Ford used to promote its bold, new car.)

'50 Years Ago' on page fifty had some special relevance via the medium of television for Australians. Three, and possibly four, of television shows with Bing were shown in 1968: *The Night of the Century*, *The Ed Sullivan Show: A Tribute to Irving Berlin, The Hollywood Palace* with Bobby Goldsboro, Sid Caesar and Jeannie C Riley and possibly the *Palace* Christmas special shown in the USA on 21st December. *Feelin' Groovy at Marine World* which was taped in September 1968 did not have the chance to get Aussies into the groove.

As you can see, Australians had to wait almost four years to see the highly praised *Edsel Show.* The insights which Jeremy Rose gave us into the making of *A Little Bit of Irish* are interesting but Australians had to wait more than a decade for it. In August 1977 Sydney folk were promised a treat when channel TEN10 publicised it as 'Filmed on location in Ireland ... the Old Groaner is joined by his wife Kathryn, and guests...' The day before the broadcast the *SMH* reminded viewers, 'A visit to Ireland by Bing Crosby would be incomplete without an Irish medley. There are quite a few in this program ...'

My final note concerns Bing Crosby and Christmas. When I read Lorne Harasen's memories in 'The Harasen Line' one paragraph in particular struck me. It must have been in the 1960s when Lorne told Larry Crosby that Bing was as much a part of Christmas as Santa Claus and the carols. Lorne might be interested to know that on Christmas Eve 1979 a writer of Sydney's *Daily Telegraph,* Walter Sullivan, remembered that Bing was 'gone but not forgotten ... Bing Crosby became as much a part of Christmas as Santa Claus.' His article was prompted by that night's prime time scheduling of *Bing Crosby: The Christmas Years*, a compilation of excerpts from some of Bing's television appearances.

Graham Pascoe gpascoe34@bigpond.com

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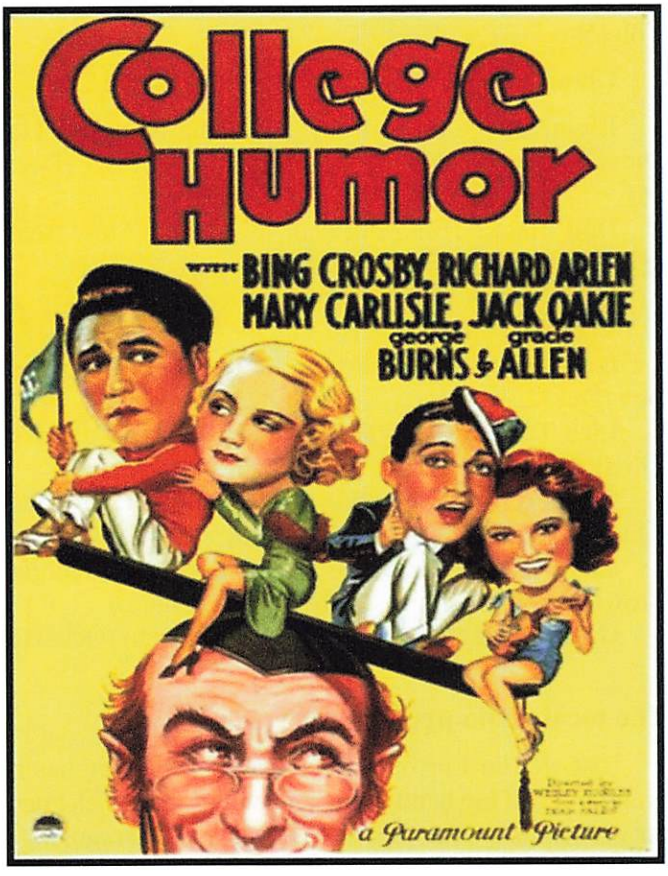
BING ON THE BOX

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

Bing's films and other items seen on TV since our last issue was prepared were as follows and as usual we owe a huge debt to TCM.

College Humor	TCM
Going Hollywood	TCM
High Society	TCM
High Time	FXM
Holiday Inn	TCM
King of Jazz	TCM
Road to Bali	TCM
That's Entertainment	TCM
Top o' the Morning	TCM
White Christmas	Netflix
White Christmas	AMC
White Christmas	Sundance



USA & Canadian Radio

Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at http://www.jazz88.fm/on-demand/ and it's always enjoyable with an eclectic selection. For the playlists go to: http://spinitron.com/radio/playlist.php?station=kbem&sv=l&showid=66

As an example, here's the playlist for his February 24th broadcast which started off with a "tree" theme.

Poinciana - So Tall a Tree - The Live Oak Tree - Sparrow in the Treetop - The Moon and the Willow Tree - Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree - Lazy Day - Sweet Lorraine - Remember Me? – Pretending - Under Paris Skies - Thou Swell - The Waiter, the Porter, and the Upstairs Maid - Tower of Babel - Sioux City Sue - Sail Along Silv'ry Moon

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series Nostalgia Radio Time on 1420 AM WJUB and on Live365 station *920 WON: The Apple* has continued its long run on Saturday nights starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET). Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program. His 17th annual Bing Crosby Christmas special on December 22 had a nicely varied selection of Bing's Christmas songs.

There's No Place like Home for the Holiday's (1971-72) - Christmas Is Here To Stay (1970) - Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (1962) - A Christmas Toast (1970) - It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas (1951) - Christmas Is for Children (1970) / The Littlest Angel (1962) - Jingle Bells with Gary Crosby (1950) - Sleigh Ride (1952) - Winter Wonderland (1942) - Silver Bells with Ella Fitzgerald (1952) - I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day (1956) - The Bells of St. Mary's (1945) - Sleigh Bell Serenade (1952) - And the Bells Rang (1970) - Christmas Carols Medley part 1 (1949) - Christmas Carols Medley part 2 (1949) - Silent Night (1942) - White Christmas (1970)

On his January 26 show, Greg included the whole of Bing's Philco broadcast from January 8, 1947 when Mickey Rooney was the guest.

You can catch Greg online at the www.1420thebreeze.com site or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows on Greg's podcast at nostalgiaradiotime.podomatic.com.

Crosby Internet Radio has continued to broadcast 24/7 with a wide variety of shows including Arne Fogel's excellent "Bing Shift" programs. The shows change on a monthly basis with the 15-minute 1954-56 show typically running throughout the day with other programs such as the KMH, Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows being interleaved every hour or so. The Crosby-Clooney shows are used frequently too.

TV highlights - UK

Crosby items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Discovering Bing Crosby	Sky Arts
Entertaining the Troops	Sky Arts
Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank	Sky Arts
Holiday Inn	Film4
The Bells of St. Mary's	Retro
The Legendary Bing Crosby	Sky Arts
White Christmas	SkyChristmas

Sky Arts showed "Comedy Legends: Bob Hope" in November. Host Barry Cryer, assisted by other talking heads, looked at Bob's career and Bing popped up frequently in various clips. A journalist called Stephen Armstrong talking about the start of the Road films suggested that Bing's career was going nowhere at the time so he decided to originate the Road films with Bob Hope! What twaddle! The programme also included erroneously a clip of Red Skelton whom had they had evidently mistaken for Hope! Ignoring these howlers though, it was quite an interesting show.

On January 10, the Gold channel showed part 3 of "Morecambe & Wise in America" and this covered the duo's appearance on the Ed Sullivan tribute to Irving Berlin which was transmitted on May 5, 1968. Bing had taped his appearance on that show on February 10, 1968 and Morecambe & Wise had taped their portion next. Eric Morecambe wrote in his personal diary: "Bing went on first and kept going wrong. They had to do his bit three times. Even then he sang "White Christmas" wrong but they let it go."

A channel called Retro Movies showed Bing singing "Where the Blue of the Night" from the Sennett short *Blue of the Night* on January 20. It was just a filler between films.

Mr. Crosby also popped up on some other TV shows.

"Give Me the Simple Life" - (Homes Under the Hammer) BBC1 Dec. 4

"The Bombardier Song" – (Made in Great Britain) BBC2 Dec. 14

"It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" – (Newsnight) BBC2 Dec. 17

Also Jeremy Rose reported on February 4, "Bing got a very brief airing and mention in one of the rounds of UK BBC2's quiz show, "Only Connect" tonight, singing a short extract from "I Kiss Your Hand Madame". The point of the question was to identify the link between four musical extracts. (The answer was "hands"...)."

UK and Irish radio

I was interviewed by Ciaran O'Connor of Dublin's 98FM station in December for a documentary called *The History of Christmas Chart Toppers,* which looked at all the iconic Christmas number ones throughout the years, as well as other notable Christmas songs, and the stories behind them. Ciaran mainly wanted to talk about "White Christmas" but I led him into other Crosby Christmas songs including the Bing 'n' Bowie duet. It played out on air four times over Christmas and got a great response. The documentary has since been released as a podcast and can be heard at:

Part 1 - https://www.98fm.com/podcasts/98fm/story-christmas-chart-topper-part-1

Part 2 - https://www.98fm.com/podcasts/98fm/story-christmas-chart-topper-part-2

The Bing segment is at the beginning.

The National Presenters

Songs played on the BBC national networks (Radio2 unless stated) of which we were aware over the last four months were:

OJ Borg: We Wish You the Merriest (Dec. 10) – True Love (Dec. 27)

Chris Evans Breakfast Show: Mele Kalikimaka (Nov. 30 and Dec. 11)

Clare Teal: Now You Has Jazz (Nov. 4) (Clare was 'live' in New Orleans and a lady on the paddle steamer told a real nice story about listening to *High Society* as a kid and hearing "Now You has Jazz".) – How About You (Nov. 18)

Claudia on Sunday: Mele Kalikimaka (Dec. 16)

Elaine Paige on Sunday: Anything You Can Do (Nov. 4) – White Christmas (Dec. 9) – True Love (Dec. 16)

Don Black: True Love (Jan. 13) – On a Slow Boat to China (with Peggy Lee) (Jan. 27)

Ken Bruce: White Christmas (Dec. 21)

Vanessa Feltz: We Wish You the Merriest (Dec. 18)

Graham Norton: Peace on Earth / Little Drummer Boy (Dec. 22)

Liza Tarbuck: It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas (Dec. 22)

Steve Wright's Sunday Love Songs: True Love (Dec. 2) – White Christmas (Dec. 23)

Jazz Record Requests: (Radio 3) Sweet Georgia Brown (Nov. 10) (requested by Jason Liddiard)

Gideon Coe: (Radio6) Don't Fence Me In (Oct. 31)

The local radio presenters

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** has a programme of big band swing and balladeers which goes out each Sunday afternoon and Bing is featured regularly.

More I Cannot Wish You – Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby (Nov. 18) – Deep Purple (Nov. 18) – Too Marvellous for Words – Let's Sing Like a Dixieland Band – Sunday, Monday or Always – Who Gave You the Roses – Love Thy Neighbour (Dec. 16) – Mele Kalikimaka – Yodellin' Jive - My Blue Heaven (Jan. 20) – It Must Be True (Feb. 3) – Baia

I sent Howard a couple of Crosby CDs left over from the Gwen Harvey / John Norris Wood collections and he played "Put Your Hand in the Hand" from the Bing 'N' Basie CD for me.

Gerald Jackson continues to use his two programmes on local radio - "Unforgettable" on Radio Lancashire on Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. and the other, the similarly named "Gerald Jackson: Unforgettable" on Radio Manchester on Sunday nights at 10pm to play plenty of Crosby. Quite a varied selection as you will see. First time I've heard "I've Got the Girl" on radio for many years.

Did Your Mother Come from Ireland (Nov. 4) – The Bombardier Song (Nov. 11) – The Teddy Bear's Picnic (Nov. 18) – Sunday, Monday or Always (Nov. 25) – Road to Morocco (Dec. 9) – The Secret of Christmas (Dec. 23) – Beautiful Dreamer (Dec. 23) – The Small One (Dec. 23) – Mele Kalikimaka (Dec. 23) – Let's Start the New Year Right (Dec. 30) – Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (Dec. 30) – Let's Start the New Year Right (Jan. 6) – As Time Goes By (Jan. 13) – I've Got the Girl (Jan. 13) – The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (Jan. 13) – Swinging on a Star (Jan. 27) – Oh, Baby Mine (Feb. 3) – My Funny Valentine (Feb. 10) – How Can You Buy Killarney (Feb. 10) – Always (Feb. 10) – Busy Doing Nothing (Feb. 17)

Bill Rennells' ***Harmony Night*** show with Al Ryan on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet is another presenter who is very happy to play Bing in response to requests.

My Heart Goes Crazy (Nov. 4) (for Stan White) – Nevertheless (Nov. 18) – So Would I (Nov. 18) – The Secret of Christmas (for Ian Lawrence) – We Wish You the Merriest (Dec. 30) – Beautiful Dreamer (Jan. 6) (for Stan) – Be Honest with Me (Feb. 10) – On Top of Old Smoky (for me)

I also sent Bill a couple of the Crosby CDs left over from the Gwen Harvey / John Norris Wood collections and he kindly played "Keep It a Secret" from the "More Memories" CD for me.

I have only recently discovered **Kelly-Anne Smith's** *Easy Sunday* show on BBC Coventry & Warwickshire and she plays a superb mixture of songs on her very slick 3-hour show which starts at mid-day every Sunday. Songs played include:

Swinging on a Star (Nov. 11) – Sam's Song (Nov. 18) – Little Jack Frost Get Lost (Dec. 9) – Love Is the Sweetest Thing (Dec. 16) – Little Jack Frost Get Lost (Dec. 23) – Swinging on a Star (Jan. 20) – Count Your Blessings (Feb. 3) – Sam's Song (Feb. 10) – Around the World (Feb. 17)

It's well worth picking up on the Internet. I wrote thanking Kelly-Anne for playing our man so regularly and as a result she made Bing's album "Songs I Wish Had Sung (the first time around)" her album of the week on March 3. She played "My Blue Heaven", "When My Baby Smiles at Me" and "Thanks for the Memory" from it. Incidentally, she is also a busy voice-over artist.

****

The BBC website has details of the Crosby songs used in the last four months and other shows playing a fair number of Bing tracks are shown below. Do please support these presenters, and those mentioned above, with requests and feedback.

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music*: (BBC Radio Wales) – Love Walked In (Nov. 11) – I'll See You in My Dreams (Jan. 20) – Love Walked In (Jan. 27) – I Love You Samantha (Jan. 27)

David Allen: (BBC Radio Surrey) – That's What Life Is All About (Nov. 3) – Around the World (Nov. 10) – Busy Doing Nothing (Dec. 1) – True Love (Dec. 8) – Let's Start the New Year Right (Dec. 29) – That's What Life Is All About (Dec. 29) – True Love (Jan. 12) – Well, Did You Evah? (Jan. 19) – Now You Has Jazz (Feb. 9) – That's What Life Is All About (Feb. 16) – True Love (Feb. 23)

Neil Foster: (BBC Radio York) – True Love (Nov. 18) - Well, Did You Evah? (Nov. 25 & Dec. 16) – Now You Has Jazz (Dec. 23) – Well, Did You Evah? (Jan. 20 & Feb. 24)

Michael Poulter: (BBC Tees) – Dear Hearts and Gentle People (Nov. 4) – Now Is the Hour (Nov. 11) – There's Nothing I Haven't Sung About (Nov. 25) – Time on My Hands (Dec. 9) – Here Comes Santa Claus (Dec. 23) – Dear Hearts and Gentle People (Feb. 24)

Serenade Radio

This on-line radio station based in Lincoln in England was born out of a desperate need to hear those great songs from that golden era of song writing. Not just the occasional one-off song, lost in a sea of pop mediocrity, but all day every day. Over the festive season, a great deal of Bing and Perry Como was played across the general schedule. ICC member John Walton presents a weekly Crooner's Club on Fridays and he mounted a Crooner's Club Bing Special on New Year's Eve. You can catch the station at http://www.serenade-radio.com

I sent them a few Crosby CDs left over from the Gwen Harvey / John Norris Wood collections and they were very pleased to receive them.

Australia

Each Monday morning from 9 to 11 (Australian Eastern Time) ICC member **Graham Pascoe** presents 'Morning Music' on community radio station 2MCE-FM, located in Bathurst, New South Wales on the campus of Charles Sturt University. Usually he plays recordings of popular music from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Needless to say, he usually plays a couple of Crosby recordings. The station broadcasts on 92.3 FM in Bathurst and its programmes are streamed (but not archived) on www.2mce.org.

Finally don't forget Carol Farman who has a Crosby tribute every Wednesday afternoon at 3pm on Golden Days Radio FM 95.7.

Malcolm Macfarlane macwilmslo@aol.com

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have left us since our last issue was prepared include:

Roy Clark, the Grammy-winning country music guitarist and TV host, died on November 15 at his home in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was 85 and had been suffering

from pneumonia.

Clark was born in Meherrin, Virginia, in 1933 and lived across the north east of the US before his family settled in Washington DC. His earliest guitar was made from a cigar box and the head of a ukulele, and he became proficient on both guitar and banjo. After initially playing in bands with the likes of Wanda Jackson, he secured a solo record deal, and crossed over into the mainstream pop charts with songs like "Yesterday, When I Was Young" which was a hit in 1969. This was the year he guested on the Bing and Carol Burnett TV special "Together Again for the First Time" when he joined in several medleys. Roy wrote about the experience in his autobiography.

"However, my biggest thrill on TV was the time I got to work with my total idol, Bing Crosby, on one of his Christmas specials. I flew from Maryland into Los Angeles for the taping. I couldn't get a direct flight and as a result was running late. I got off the airplane and went right to the rehearsal studio on Sunset Blvd. Les Brown [sic, it was John Scott Trotter*], Bing's orchestra leader, was there, along with some members of the band. I walked in with my clothes bag over one arm, my guitar under the other, and saw Bing lying on a bench. Mind you, we'd never met. He was just stretched out, resting, while the orchestra rehearsed his charts. He had a ball cap pulled down over his eyes, and when he heard me come in he raised it to see who it was. 'Hey, Roy, how you doin'?' he said in that familiar drawl. My idol! Of all the people I ever wanted to be like, to emulate, Bing Crosby was at the top of the list! He was everything I ever wanted to be, with one of the truly great voices. In my estimation he could sing a song better than anyone who ever lived. When he sang, he made it look so easy. Like that was the only thing he did. Or when he was acting, it was the same thing, as if that was the only thing he did.*

Roy with Bing, Carol Burnett and Juliet Prowse in 1969.

I'll never forget, we were also supposed to do a duet of 'Moon River'. Bing and I would get there early, or stay late, to rehearse our parts. This one time we were sitting by the piano, working on the harmonies, when his lovely wife, Kathryn, came into the room. Understand, all of my life I worked with trios of tenor singers, which allowed me to do a lot of switching of parts. If I got too high for one guy, he could drop down and another could take over. The upside of that type of singing is the production of beautiful harmonies. The downside for me was that I didn't know a legitimate part from Adam. Well, Bing was trying his best to teach me my part, but the harmony I sang wasn't the harmony written. He sat there, played block chords on the piano, and finally looked up to me after I hit another note I wasn't supposed to, stopped, turned to Kathryn and said, 'You know what his problem is? He was raised on that Presbyterian harmony!'"
(From 'My Life in Spite of Myself' by Roy Clark)

Roy also appeared on the Bell Telephone Jubilee in 1976 which was hosted by Bing. In 1982 he was awarded a Grammy for best country instrumental performance, for Alabama Jubilee. He is perhaps best known for hosting the TV country music variety show "Hee Haw", which started in 1969 and ran for more than two decades. In 1983, Clark opened the Roy Clark Celebrity Theatre in Branson, Missouri, which was the first venue linked permanently to a widely known entertainer. Roy frequently played in Branson during the 1980s and 1990s. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Barbara, with whom he had four children.

Nancy Wilson, the song stylist (as she liked to be known) passed away on December 13 at the age of 81. An Emmy and Grammy Award winner, she had more than 30 albums on the Billboard charts. Nancy Sue Wilson was born on Feb. 20, 1937, in Chillicothe, Ohio, the first of six children of Olden Wilson, a supervisor at an iron foundry, and Lillian (Ryan) Wilson, a maid. Her father introduced her to records by mainly male artists, like Nat King Cole and Billy Eckstine. She sang avidly from the age of 4, and by the time she was 10 she was the lead singer in the local choir. Nancy had no formal training. As a teenager, Ms. Wilson became entranced by the female singers she heard on a local jukebox, especially Dinah Washington, whose ear for irony and keen sense of drama affected her deeply. At 15, while she was still a student at West High School in Columbus, Ohio, Nancy entered a talent contest held by the local television station WTVN; it led to regular appearances twice a week on its show "Skyline Melodies." Ms. Wilson spent one year at Central State College in Ohio before dropping out to pursue music full time. She honed her skills by touring continuously in the Midwest and Canada with Rusty Bryant's Carolyn Club Big Band, with which she cut her first recordings, for Dot Records. Seven years passed before she felt ready to move to New York, in 1959 where her career really took off.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Nancy earned a reputation as an acclaimed entertainer through her successful recordings, her live performances and television appearances, including a stint with her own Emmy Award-winning music variety program *The Nancy Wil-*

son Show (1967-68). She also appeared on other variety shows, including the first ever *Hollywood Palace* show in January 1964 which was hosted by Bing. Her next interaction with our Mr. Crosby was on the Bob Hope Show of December 15, 1965 but sadly they never sang together. As recently as 2006, her album "Turned to Blue", won the Grammy Award for Best Jazz Vocal Album that year.

Ms. Wilson's marriage in 1960 to the drummer Kenny Dennis ended in divorce a decade later. In 1973, she married Wiley Burton, a Presbyterian minister, and remained with him until his death in 2008. She is survived by her three children, two sisters, and five grandchildren.

Christine McGuire, the eldest of the singing McGuire Sisters, died on December 28 at her home in Las Vegas. She was 92.

After appearing on "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts" in 1952, the McGuire Sisters soared to national fame. They were regulars on Mr. Godfrey's morning shows for six years and remained one of the nation's most popular vocal groups into the 1960s, singing on television, in nightclubs and on records that sold millions, even as teenage rebellion, Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll transformed the music world.

The fashion-conscious Christine chose the sisters' matching wardrobes, Dorothy kept track of finances, and Phyllis did most of the talking for the trio. Their million-selling records included two No. 1 hits, "Sincerely" in 1955 and "Sugartime" in 1958. Like other white performers of their generation, they recorded what critics called blander (but often better-selling) covers of rhythm-and-blues hits by black artists. They appeared with Bing on the Bell Telephone Hour in October, 1964.

with Burl Ives and the McGuire Sisters on the Bell Telephone show.

In 1965, Phyllis McGuire's idealized image was shattered by a grand jury appearance that exposed her longtime affair with a Chicago mobster, Sam Giancana. By then, the sisters' popularity had begun to fade, and in 1968 the trio broke up, Christine and Dorothy to raise families and Phyllis to perform solo.

But they made a successful comeback in 1985, and went on to perform for almost two decades at casinos and clubs in Las Vegas, Atlantic City and elsewhere, capitalizing on the nostalgia of fans who had aged with them. Their last gig was a 2004 PBS special, "Magic Moments: The Best of '50s Pop."

Ruby Christine McGuire was born in Middletown, Ohio, on July 30, 1926, to Asa and Lillie (Fultz) McGuire. Her father was a steelworker and her mother a minister of the First Church of God in Miamisburg, Ohio.

Christine, who rarely used her original first name, took piano lessons for eight years. She and her sisters began singing for weddings and other services at their mother's church in 1935. They later sang at hospitals and military bases. Discovered on local television, they went to New York City and climbed to fame on Mr. Godfrey's popular TV shows.

Christine McGuire was married four times. Her marriage to Harold Ashcraft in 1942 ended in divorce in 1950. They had two sons, Harold and Asa. In 1952 she married John Teeter. They were divorced in 1962. Her 1967 marriage to Robert H. Spain, a financier, also ended in divorce. In 2002 she married David Mudd, a Long Island vintner, who died in 2011. Asa Ashcraft died at 68 in 2015. Dorothy McGuire died in 2012.

Ms. McGuire is survived by her son, Harold Ashcraft; her sister, Phyllis; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One grandchild, Cpl. Evan Asa Ashcraft, was killed in the Iraq war in 2003 when an Army vehicle he was in was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade near the northern city of Mosul.

André Previn, the German-born pianist, conductor and composer, died on February 28 at the age of 89. He won four Academy Awards for his film work and ten Grammy Awards for his recordings (and one more for his Lifetime Achievement). Born in Berlin, his Jewish family left Germany in 1938 to live in Paris, but moved to Los Angeles after a year or so. His great-uncle, Charles Previn, was music director of Universal Studios. André grew up in Los Angeles and became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1943. He won his first two Oscars, for best scoring of a musical picture (a category that has since been retired), for *Gigi* and *Porgy & Bess* in 1958 and 1959, respectively, while still in his 20s. He then won two for best adaptation or treatment (another retired sub-category) in 1963 and 1964 for *Irma la Douce* and *My Fair Lady*, respectively. He later abandoned films to conduct such esteemed orchestras as the London Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

André (right) with Buddy Ebsen and Caterina Valente on a 1963 TV show with Bing.

Previn often appeared on television and is particularly remembered in Britain for his performance as "Mr. Andrew Preview" (or "Privet") on the *Morecambe and Wise* Christmas Show in 1971. He worked with Bing as a performer and as musical director on a couple of Mr. Crosby's TV specials in the early 60s. You can see Bing on YouTube introducing André playing a piano solo of "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah" from the November 7, 1963 show. In 1962, Bing wrote that he considered André to be "one of the great talents in the musical field." They had both previously appeared in the film *Pepe* (1960) but were not on screen at the same time.

Previn was married five times, the first time to jazz singer Betty Bennett. His second marriage was to Dory Langan, aka Dory Previn, a lyricist with whom he collaborated on several Oscar-nominated film scores and who explored the collapse of their troubled marriage in an album. His third wife was actress Mia Farrow, for whom he had abandoned Dory Previn (he and Farrow were subsequently divorced in the wake of her liaison with Woody Allen). Previn tied the knot for a fourth time with Heather Sneddon and, finally, in 2002, to the renowned violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, nearly 35 years his junior, after he had composed a concerto for her, titled "Anne-Sophie." They divorced four years later but continued their musical partnership unabated.

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

As 1919 unwound, Harry Crosby (aged 15) was in his third year at Gonzaga High School and was elected as Sergeant-At-Arms in Third Year High School. He was a member of the Junior Yard Association basketball team and he had a small part as "second citizen" when his class presented *Julius Caesar* at St. Aloysius Hall on February 24. On April 14, he recited "In Freedom's Cause" in the Annual Elocution Contest held in the Parish Hall.

75 YEARS AGO

As 1944 began, Bing was still filming *Road to Utopia* and hosting the weekly *Kraft Music Hall* show. Guests on the Music Hall in the subsequent weeks included Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, Phil Silvers, Donald O'Connor, George Murphy, Cass Daley, Dale Evans and Sonny Tufts. Apart from this Bing was heavily engaged in shows for the Armed Forces Radio Service such as "Command Performance" and "Mail Call". On January 10, he became the first white performer to guest on the usually segregated show *Jubilee*.

Many weekends he was involved in war bond promotions often on the golf course with Bob Hope. At the end of January, Bing and Hope put on a two-day pro-am Charity Golf Tournament at Lakeside Golf Club. After the golf, a war bond auction was held and Bing took part as an auctioneer with Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, and Kay Kyser. Kyser bid $20,000 to hear Bing and Frank Sinatra sing together and in response they duetted "People Will Say We're in Love." The proceedings were captured on film by Paramount News and included in its newsreel of February 6.

Bing and Frank sing "People Will Say We're in Love".

On February 7, Bing recorded songs from *Going My Way*, including "Swinging on a Star" on which The Williams Brothers Quartet (including a young Andy

Williams) accompanied the crooner. Andy recalled the event years later.

> As well as our radio work, we were also singing at any venue that would have us, and we did many *Mail Call* programs: hour-long shows made for our servicemen overseas. Many Hollywood stars appeared on *Mail Call,* and it was through the show that we secured our own breakthrough: a recording session with the biggest star of them all, Bing Crosby. It is hard now to believe just how much Bing dominated the music industry at the time. At one point *Music Digest* estimated that his recordings accounted for more than half of the entire eighty thousand hours of recorded music played on the radio every week. Backed by the Notre Dame boys' choir, Bing had sung a number called "Swinging on a Star" in the movie *Going My Way.* He now wanted to put it out as a record, but the boys' choir was not available, so Bing's musical director, John Scott Trotter, was looking for another backing group. He heard us singing on *Mail Call* and promptly hired us to do the backing vocals for $25 apiece.
>
> Bing Crosby was an idol to us, and it was an honor to be given the chance to sing with him, but we were so in awe of him that we were practically trembling, with our arms around one another, as we recorded the song. Bing had a reputation for being a lot less charming offstage than on it, but, if so, we never saw that side of him. He was always very kind and encouraging, both then and in later years.
>
> Released in early 1944, "Swinging on a Star" became a huge hit.
>
> (Andy Williams, writing in *Moon River and Me*, page 41)

Bing undertook another record date on February 11 and one of the songs – the Cole Porter song "I Love You" – spent five weeks at the top of the charts during an 18-week stay. Another recording session on February 17 included "I'll Be Seeing You" and this went to the top of the charts for four weeks during a 24-week period in the *Billboard* list. On February 25, Bing's film *Going My Way* was shown at a Los Angeles trade show and received a very favourable response.

The groaner took two weeks off from the Kraft show in March in order to go to Elko. Having been flooded out at the old Jube Wright ranch along the Humboldt River the previous year, Bing exchanged it (and an undisclosed amount of cash) for the Quarter Circle S, a 19,000-acre cattle ranch fifty miles to the north of Elko in Independence Valley, near Tuscarora, Nevada.

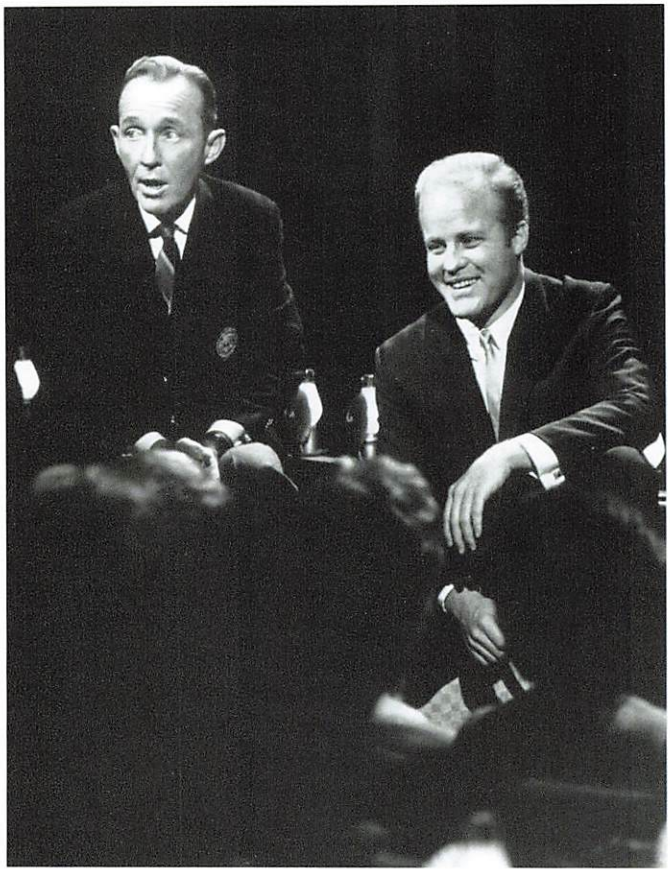
On April 22, Bing's record of "San Fernando Valley" reached the top of the charts where it had five weeks at number one. It was turning out to be quite a year!

50 YEARS AGO

The Crosby family had spent Christmas at the Rising River ranch in Northern California where they were snowed in for a while. On January 11, 1969, Bing and Kathryn attended the wedding of Bob Hope's daughter, Linda, to Nathaniel Greenblatt Lande at St. Charles Borromeo Church, North Hollywood. Afterwards they were amongst 1,000 guests at the reception on the rolling back lawns of the Hope estate where a billowing white silk circus tent had been erected. Guests included Vice President Spiro Agnew, Governor Ronald Reagan, Danny Kaye, Gregory Peck, Jack Benny, Danny Thomas, Dorothy Lamour, and Ed Sullivan plus their respective partners. Sadly, the marriage ended in divorce.

The twenty-eighth Bing Crosby Pro-Am Golf Tournament took place later in January. Bing watched George Archer win after the first day was washed out by heavy rain. Celebrities playing included Dean Martin, Jack Lemmon, Sean Connery, James Garner and Andy Williams. The event turned out to have the largest television audience of the year for a golfing occasion. Soon afterwards, Bing and Kathryn flew to Las Cruces for a break as Kathryn had been suffering from a nasty case of the 'flu.

On February 14 back in Los Angeles, Bing taped a *Hollywood Palace* show which was shown on April 5. His son Phillip appeared together with the Four Tops, Shelley Berman, and Sally Ann Howes.



Bing and Phillip on the Hollywood Palace show.

Next it was off to New York for B & K where Bing received the Gold Tee Award for 1968 from the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association at the National Awards Dinner at the Americana Hotel. The award is for raising millions of dollars from his annual golf tournament for charities that provide educational opportunities for young people. During their stay in New York, Kathryn involved Bing in several dinners designed to raise funds for the Immaculate Heart College. Another *Hollywood Palace* show with Victor Borge, Frank Sinatra Jr., Gary Crosby and The Temptations was taped later in February and shown on March 1. Bing again gently plugged his *Hey Jude, Hey Bing!* LP and sang "Hey Jude" with Gary Crosby.

The Crosby family flew to Las Cruces for Easter and during their absence, Larry Crosby gave the FBI a threatening letter addressed to Bing in which Bing is asked to send $6,000.

On April 25, at a press conference in Los Angeles, Kathryn officially presented a $1 million gift to the Immaculate Heart College for the construction of a science building on the school's planned new campus in Claremont, California. Bing was still at Las Cruces. He had not been able to play golf for many months because of the return of his bursitis problems.

KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker brings us up-to-date.

Material for me to write about comes in irregular fits. Sometimes I feel I must be standing at a wayside halt with an invisible overgrown "track" and just occasionally have the good fortune to spend time at a busy junction with "tracks" in every direction. Today I'm afraid tends to the former.

First I'd like to thank those who have been in contact over the Time Life DVD set covered in the last issue of BING. The reaction to my possibly overlong piece has been far greater than that for anything else that I have contributed to this column, and ranges from the "thanks for saving me the money" variety to "I wish I'd known sooner". It's good to have feedback and pleasing to know that those who have viewed the DVDs agree with my conclusions. It is interesting to note that the set appears no longer to be listed by Time Life on their website.

COMPACT DISCS

Bing Crosby: Holiday in Europe (And Beyond) ***Sepia 1334*** ***£7.99 UK***

Whilst I covered this issue in the last issue of BING I think it worth a revisit, both because I have little new to write about but also because I had not actually heard the CD as issued and was not 100% certain of the sources of the radio material, an omission which I can now correct. The issue fully meets expectations with the "bonus" material being a very appropriate addition to the core concept. Drawing the songs from a variety of sources with different backings and styles gives some interesting variety.

1. April in Portugal 2. C'est Si Bon 3. Never on Sunday 4. More and More Amor 5. Moment in Madrid 6. Morgen 7. Two Shadows on the Sand 8. Under Paris Skies/9. Domenica 10. Pigalle 11. My Heart Still Hears the Music 12. Melancholie

Bonus Tracks - from GE Radio 13. Hawaiian Paradise* (rec. 2 or 3/1953, broadcast 7 May 1953) 14. The Belle of Barcelona* (rec. 2 or 3/1953, broadcast 25 June 1953) 15. Tobermory Bay* (rec. 28 Mar. 1954, broadcast 25 April 1954

From studio recordings – "Bing with a Beat" with Bob Scobey - 16. Along The Way to Waikiki 17. Down Among the Sheltering Palms - *"Road to Hong Kong"*- 18. Road to Hong Kong *with Bob Hope* - *"Bing & Satchmo"* 19. Way down Yonder in New Orleans 20. Let's Sing Like a Dixieland Band - *with Bob Hope "Paris Holiday"*- 21. Paris Holiday *"El Senor Bing"* - 22. Pagan Love Song/Cuban Love Song 23. Down Argentina Way/What a Diff'rence a Day Made - *"Fancy Meeting You Here"* - 24. Calcutta w*ith Rosemary Clooney* - Single - 25. Around the World 26. C'est Si Bon* *(Rehearsal Track)*

**=first time on CD.*

The accompanying notes by Christopher Popa give extraordinarily full discographical information about the releases in varying forms and mentions issues in several countries, though the layout is a little confusing. The broadcast dates shown are those of first airing. Personally I am always interested in rehearsal takes as they give a view about the

development of the recordings, so I welcome the inclusion of the "C'est Si Bon" rehearsal. Possibly some time we may have that complete rehearsal session on CD. It is both instructive and amusing.

CHRISTMAS WITH BING

1. White Christmas 2. Winter Wonderland 3. Do You Hear What I Hear? 4. I'll Be Home for Christmas 5. The Little Drummer Boy 6. It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas 7. What Child Is This - The Holly and The Ivy 8. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen 9. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing/It Came Upon the Midnight Clear 10. Here Comes Santa Claus 11. (non Bing) 12. Frosty the Snowman 13. Let's Start the New Year Right 14. Mele Kalikimaka 15. Silent Night 16.The Twelve Days of Christmas 17. Happy Holiday 18. O Holy Night 19. Santa Claus Is Coming to Town 20. Jingle Bells 21. Sleigh Ride 22. Auld Lang Syne.

This is a "virtual" CD available to stream or download from streaming services and there is no physical equivalent. It was drawn to my attention by Ted Nesi and I include it here because it is an indicator of the way things are developing. There is of course nothing new about "virtual" CDs. Several years ago we had two from Bing Crosby Enterprises, and some current stars have made a point of such issues, whilst there are numerous "unofficial" compilations of Crosby material. However this issue is "official" as it comes from Universal Music Group and so far as I know it is the first such. Unfortunately the title is bound to confuse: there are countless others with the same or very similar titles and no means of further clarification is available as the title is the only identifier. The content is a mix of material from the Capitol/UMG "Christmas Classics" most recently reissued on CD in 2006 with interspersed older tracks and some omissions, but I wonder why Dean Martin has crept in on track 11 with "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"? I am sure that with sales of physical CDs dropping with alarming speed such issues will be commonplace.

STATE OF THE UNION - The American Dream in Crisis 1967-1973.

Ace - CDCHD 1533 ($12.69) Also on LP ($29.99)

A 2-CD compilation drawn to my attention with a single track from Bing – "What Do We Do with the World?" *and otherwise an eclectic mix of tracks from stars active in the period shown and the immediately preceding years. The publicity blurb includes* "By mid-1968 there was a growing consensus that something had gone horribly wrong with the American dream. The nation's youth had loudly made their feelings clear, but now the older, pre-Beatles generations began to look at the country - with urban riots, Vietnam, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy - and wonder what the hell was happening". *The track titles e.g. "Clean Up Your Own Back Yard" - Elvis Presley, "Brand New Day" - Della Reese, "Abraham, Martin and John" – Dion, might appear to reflect to some degree the politically oriented cover title even if the actual song contents might not. I find it all very odd.*

DVDs and BLU-RAY

I have previously mentioned the forthcoming Kino Lorber Studio Classics Blu-ray issues of some "Road" films. All should be available by the time you read this at prices in the range $15-$18. Region A only. I know that these are not the first outings on Blu-ray but Kino Lorber have a good track record in this area and possibly some "cleaning" has been achieved. They do have some possibly interesting extras though there is duplication as all include "Bob Hope and the Road to Success". The others are – ***"Road to Singapore"*** *– "Entertaining the Troops".* ***"Road to Zanzibar"*** *– "Command Performance 1944".* ***"Road to Morocco"*** *- Audio commentary by film historian Jack Theakston / "Command Performance 1945".* ***"Road to Utopia"*** *- Audio commentary by filmmaker Greg Ford and film & music historian Will Friedwald / "Hollywood Victory Caravan".*

OTHER MATTERS

Slightly off–piste for me but I feel I can justify mention of an item that appeared on TV in the UK on one of the prime TV channels – BBC no less, in a series entitled "Icons of the 20th Century". The series consisted of seven episodes, each devoted to particular activities. The individuals chosen for detailed mention in each section were drawn from a pre-determined shortlist, and whilst the BBC had a long introductory piece about the methodology used the key passage was *"The panels were asked to think about* ***legacy, achievement, impact, influence, contribution to the field,***

and profile or iconic status. They were asked to suggest people from across the entirety of the 20th century, ***rather than putting forward a shortlist of icons purely from the recent past."*** (my emphasis). The short list for the entertainment section created by this process consisted of Charlie Chaplin, Billie Holiday, Marilyn Monroe and David Bowie, to whom the final vote went, on the basis that he was "An innovator constantly at music's cutting edge". I can only express bemusement at both the list and the final outcome, which fails on its own selection criteria. Bowie at best had an impact on the final third to a quarter of the century, almost wholly in the sphere of popular music. I am sure that many readers can think of other candidates at least as worthy as some on the shortlist, but to my mind it is hard to think of many people with as wide an influence, over the length of time and range of activity (on record, radio, film and TV) as Bing, of whom there was no mention at all. Bing's major and lasting influence in singing style and use of the microphone, the use of recording technology in radio and his overall impact, not least in pure volume of record sales and recurring seasonal popularity, seem to me to be a perfect fit with the stated selection objectives. The whole affair appears to me to demonstrate, again, how heavily short term memories influence such dubious pseudo competitions.

Richard Baker bakerstonb@gmail.com

Bing 'n' Basie

Lorne Harasen went to see the Count Basie Orchestra recently.

It's been a long time since I have been overwhelmed by a musical performance but it happened on March 11, 2019 at Arizona Musicfest in Scottsdale Arizona. It was a concert by the Count Basie Orchestra in a church that seats about 1500 hundred people. I was in Arizona for spring training of major league baseball and an escape from Canadian winter.

Under the direction of Scotty Barnhart the band began with a stirring rendition of "This could be the start of something big"and so it was. The power and beautiful orchestration and various solos brought a lump to my throat which remained there for at least the first half of the show.

Basie has been gone for 30 years but the orchestra continues to perform in concert and recordings which it has done for more than 80 years. Barnhart introduced the band as "The greatest jazz band in the world" and I would caution anyone betting their retirement money against that statement.

There are members of the orchestra who had been hired by Basie himself and others that have been there for ten, twenty or thirty years or more.

Bing Crosby recorded an album with the Count Basie Orchestra in 1971 called **Bing 'n Basie**. Here is what Bing said to me when I spoke to him about the album: **"He is great fun to work with, the Count. I enjoyed making that album because I've been a fan of the band for years and always went to see them when they toured through this way, and it's a great band as you know. The organization has almost been the same for years, well disciplined. These guys really know what they're doing. The arrangements were interesting and colourful. It was an exciting date I really enjoyed."**

There was something written in this journal in the recent past which was critical of the album because of what was called a missed opportunity. The implication being that it should have been a collection of pure jazz.

Let's consider what songwriter Johnny Mercer, who contributed a boat load of standards to that great selection of jazz songs and music, had to say about the album in some liner notes.

Referring to Crosby and Basie as musical greats he noted that the album includes seven songs that are or will be standards. He said: "Not only is the number one singer of my generation in fine fettle, but that old Kansas City boy, Bill Basie is in there swingin' pretty good himself. Those little graceful pianistics up on the treble, that terrific Basie drive." Mercer added that "great wisdom was shown in the choice of songs." Two of them, **Snowbird** and **Put Your Hand in the Hand** were written by the late Canadian songwriter, Gene MacLellan.

Johnny Mercer writes, "here with Count Basie, Der Bingle rides again and I'm sure it is a proud and happy moment for these two musical giants, behemoths of the blues, rajahs of rock, Sultans of Soul and groovy performers." Could not have said it better myself!

Lorne Harasen

Bing Crosby

February 18, 1977

Dear Johnny:

Thanks for your note and for the tape. I enjoyed the tape very much - particularly the one you did with Richard Crooks and me.

Glad you liked the Palladium performance and also the album. It's really very hard to get good quality - taping a live show from the theatre - because of the problem of microphone placement, etc., and getting a proper balance between the band and the singer, but I think they did as good a job as could be done under these circumstances.

I like the album recently done by Decca called, "Feels Good, Feels Right". The Alan Cohen arrangements have proven very popular with people who have heard the album.

As far as improving your golf is concerned, I don't know any really outstanding tip to give anybody except stay behind the ball with your body - don't sway over the ball. Take a good big backswing, a good big turn. Hit through the ball but don't let your body precede the clubhead. That seems to be a problem that harrasses most golfers. I hope it's helpful to you.

Thanks again,

Bing Crosby

BC:lm

Mr. Johnny Joyce

5 Shelley Road

the clubhead. That seems to be a problem that harrasses most golfers. I hope it's helpful to you.

Thanks again,

Bing Crosby

BC:lm

Mr. Johnny Joyce

5 Shelley Road

Going over BIG at Niagara—
Sentenced for life—
19 "BLUE SKIES" 46